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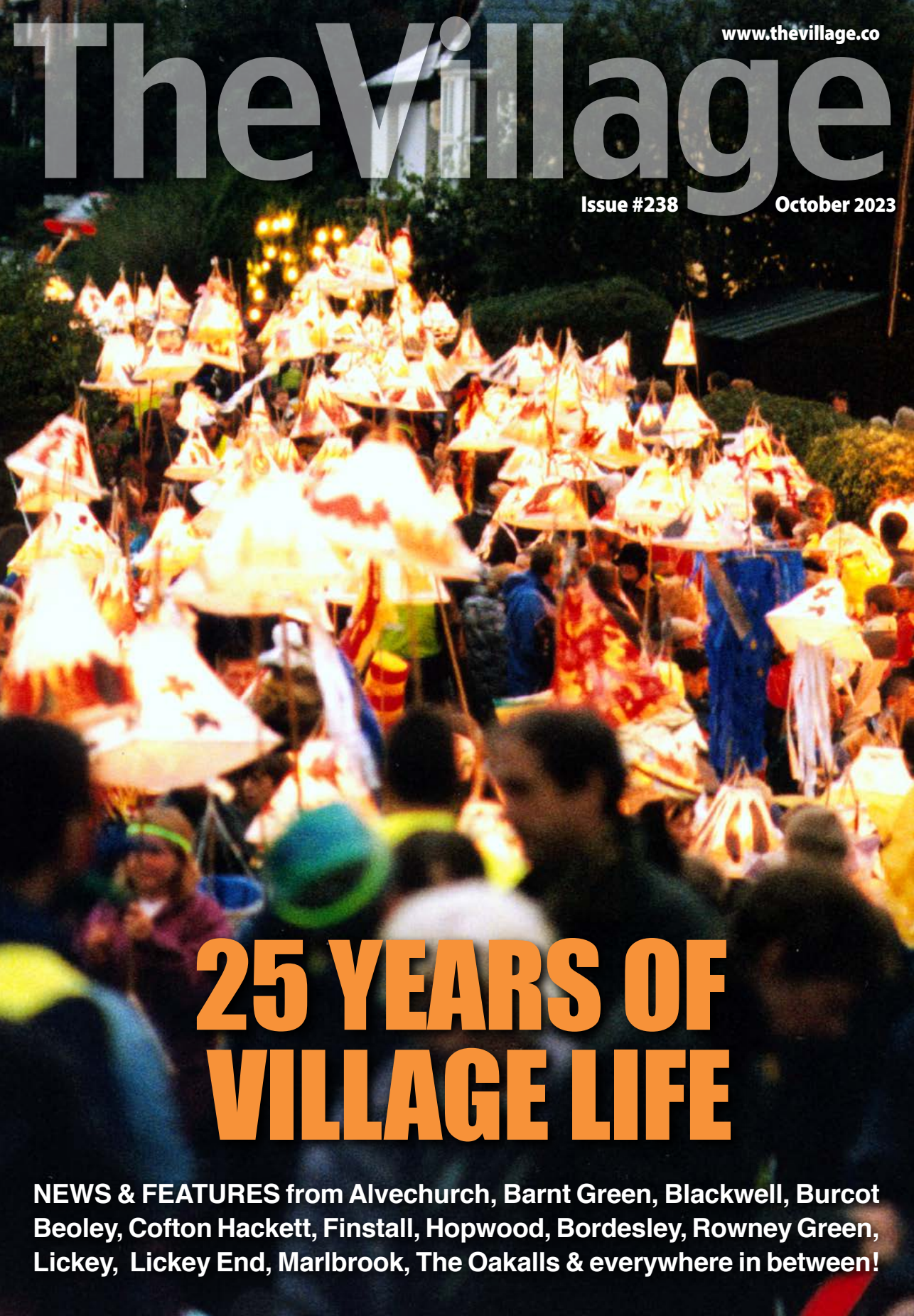
TheVillage

Issue #238 October 2023



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TheVillage Issue 238 October 2023

inside

Bringing you village life for 25 years

Editorial:
Francesca Peach

Tel: 07536 987950
email:
fran@villageonline.co.uk
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Publisher:
Richard Peach
richard@villageonline.co.uk

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Front cover: The cover picture, by Andrew Fox, on the first issue of *The Village* in October 1998. *Has is really been 25 years?* See Page 13

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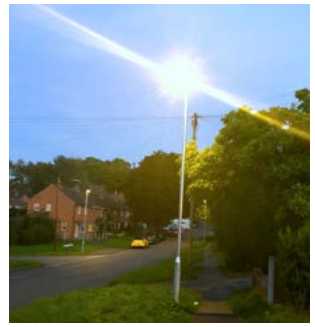

Above: One of the new lights in Snake Lane, Alvechurch.

Turned off by 'urban' lighting

VILLAGERS have taken a dim view of new lighting installed in their street.

They told parish councillors that the new footpath lighting on Snake Lane, Alvechurch was a waste of money, damaging to a village environment and unnecessary

They also feel that residents weren't consulted before the decision was made to instal the new lights. One resident, Jo Bradley, told the monthly parish council meeting: "Alvechurch is a village not an urban sprawl. The more lampposts there are makes it turn into a more urban environment".

Another villager, Dave Ward, told the council: "They are not needed, are out of scale and out of character."

Parish chairman Marc Worrall thanked the residents and said that this would be discussed by the Planning and Highways Committee.

HOPE FOR LANDMARK

A DISUSED landmark village building could make a perfect visitor centre for the proposed 8 Hills Regional Park.

The suggestion of using the Bilberry Centre at the bottom of Rose Hill in Cofton Hackett – in a prime spot for visitors to the area – was put forward by the Lickey Hills Society.

The society was responding to a consultation on the 8 Hills proposal by the National Trust, which suggested a discovery centre could be created "somewhere near" Cofton Park.

The Lickey Hills Society says the "well loved" Bilberry Centre would fit the purpose, with car parking made available at the old Cofton Village Hall site and linked to the centre by a bridge over the Arrow.

"This site would be better placed than Cofton Park as it is within the proposed regional park and a few metres from the footpaths to Rednal and Bilberry Hills," said Mike Brooke, chair of the Lickey Hills Society.

"It is also close to Drovers Way, and the Old Rose and Crown with its sports facilities. The Bilberry Centre is also very near to the North Worcestershire Path, an important feature of the regional park plan which has connectivity as a major aim."

Mr Brooke added: "The Bilberry Centre site was originally donated to the people of Birmingham as a benefit to the Lickey Hills and the locality by Mr and Mrs Barrow Cadbury in 1904. If the building became a discovery centre, it would fall within this legacy envisaged by the Cadbury family."

Above: The Bilberry Tea Rooms in their Edwardian hey-day.

Left: The shuttered and vandalised building now, with demolition vans outside.

The future of the Bilberry Centre was discussed at a meeting in September between Birmingham City Council and Cofton Hackett Parish Council, where it was clarified that the building is owned by a trust administered by the city council and the Charities Commission.

The meeting heard that vandals had created major problems at the rear of the building and as this had the least architectural significance, it was to be demolished to enhance the chances of preserving the main building.

Demolition of this section would take away the easiest access point for vandals, said Philip Andrews, a Birmingham City Council properties officer. He hoped the stable block could be saved and gave assurances that the main aim was to preserve the main building which housed the historic old tea room.

Mr Andrews said if a genuine proposal for the building was presented, then this would be considered.

Helping to save planet still on hold

A DECISION on the future of "wilding" verges around Alvechurch has again been kicked into the long grass.

After a long debate at the July meeting of the parish council, they returned to the issue in September for another lengthy debate, which ended in it being deferred again until the next meeting.

A statement from former Bromsgrove district councillor Annette English explained that after careful research, ten areas of Alvechurch had been selected and left to grow this year and asked that the parish council agreed to increase the biodiversity of these ten grass areas in the parish.

Parish councillor Steve Hornsby said: "If every village in Bromsgrove did the same thing, building wildlife corridors, trying to stop the destruction of the environment we would all be doing our little bit."

To applause from residents at the meeting, he said: "We need to lead our residents for our future generations."

But a number of councillors felt they still did not have sufficient information to make an informed decision and the meeting decided to wait until more could be obtained from Bromsgrove District Council.

Parish throws book at plans for library

COST-CUTTING PLANS that would make a major village library less accessible to teenagers were criticised by parish councillors.

They heard that Worcestershire County Council wants to extend its "Libraries Unlocked" programme to libraries including Alvechurch.

The cost-cutting exercise would mean reduced staffing and manned opening hours, with provision for key card access to people who become a Libraries Unlocked member.

This scheme is currently in place in Droitwich and Stourport, but hearing that under-16s would not be able to use the library unless with an older member, councillors were keen to lodge an objection while waiting for further questions to be answered by the county council.

Councillor Keith Wiseman said the schools in Alvechurch hadn't been consulted and raised concerns about how after-school clubs would operate under the new system.

Councillor Rachael Bailes, who is also a Bromsgrove District Councillor said the district council would be looking into the plans as well.

Parish councillors decided to contact county councillor Aled Luckman, expressing their concern and asking for more information.

20 is plenty for us

THE ROWNEY Green Association is calling for the introduction of a 20mph limit through their village. They say the make-up of their roads and the current average speeds recorded meet the Department of Transport guidelines for the introduction of a lower limit.

The association is submitting a paper detailing their request to Worcestershire County Council, pointing out that the scheme wouldn't need any traffic calming measures to make it feasible.

Reservation hope

BORDESLEY villagers may soon have a central reservation to help them cross the busy road with traffic thundering between the Alvechurch bypass and Redditch. This was revealed by county councillor Aled Luckman who said the county was planning to install a "pedestrian refuge" in Bordesley at the same time as a new one on the similarly busy A441 road through Hopwood.

Bays watch

THE TWO disabled parking bays in front of the Co-op in Alvechurch are legally enforceable and don't need to be turned into one, county councillor Aled Luckman told the parish council. The county would repaint the two bays and install signs at the end of each bay, making it clear they are for Blue Badge holders only. "After this work there should be no excuse for enforcement action not to be taken."

Democracy bid

BROMSGROVE district councillors have agreed to adopt a new system of governance that they say should increase democracy. The original plan was to run the council by a committee system, but they have now voted for a "leader and elected cabinet". Alvechurch independent district councillor Alan Bailes, who was on the governance task force, told *The Village*: "This new system will mean that the controlling group will not be able to scrutinise their own decisions."

Boy racer squeeze

BOY RACERS speeding in noisy cars along village roads are on the rise after being forced off Birmingham's streets by an injunction, Alvechurch parish councillors heard.

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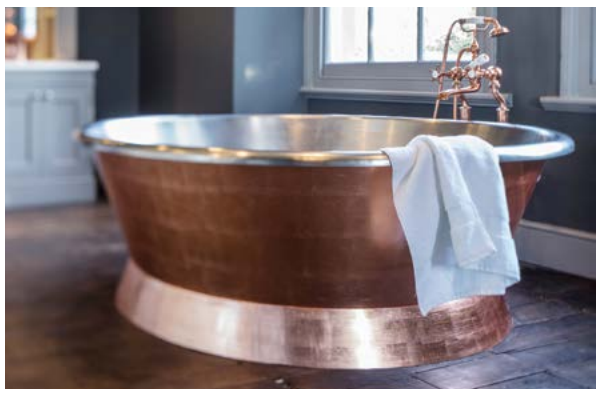

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Opening doors to history

DURING September, thousands of venues across the country held open days to celebrate their history and heritage, while allowing people to explore and discover places they might not have been to before.

Locations in *The Village* area opened their doors to the public, encouraging them to learn more about what they do and what they provide for the community.

ST Laurence Church, Alvechurch welcomed villagers and visitors, after having to cancel the event in 2022 due to the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II the same weekend.

There was plenty to do for all ages including storytelling, hook a duck, archery, a model railway, and teddy bear parachuting.

One unfortunate teddy managed to get stuck on a window ledge while taking the plunge off the roof of the church tower. The parachuting was stopped briefly while a rescue team got it down safely, much to the relief of the crowd.

Inside, hot drinks and cakes were available along with hot dogs and other snacks.

There was also the opportunity for visitors to find out more about some village organisations, with stands from Hilltop Women's Institute, Alvechurch Village Larder, Better Together, Belmont Healthcare and more.

Performances from Alvechurch Morris Men, Alvechurch Community Choir, Endeavour Dance group and Irish dancing kept people entertained throughout the day, which finished with Pimms and hymns in the church.

Clockwise from left: A parachuting bunny is rescued after making an unexpected stop. The Alvechurch Morris Men entertain the crowd. Two exhibitors, Belmont Healthcare and Better Together, on their stands.

VISITORS to the Lickey Hills Country Park had the rare opportunity to visit the quarry when the Park held its open day.

The Lickey Hills Society, invited visitors to view and hear more about the fascinating history on their doorstep, *writes Keith Woolford*.

The visitor centre school room had maps, drawings, paintings and information available for visitors to explore. Knowledgeable Lickey Hills Society members were also on hand to answer questions from the public.

Walks to both WWI and WWII areas were conducted by Lickey Hills park rangers and a walking presentation by Sandra Mason and Jill Harvey was also offered for visitors to learn more about the park.

Heritage walk: Jill Harvey and Sandra Mason lead an informative talk.

The Shamrock Spitfire

Nigel Davey tells *The Village* about his upcoming World War II film, which was written, directed and produced by villagers, and recently completed filming in the area.

VILLAGE filmmakers have been busy working on a World War II feature film, which is due to be released in 2024.

The film tells the true story of Dublin-born Spitfire hero Brendan Finucane. The team have recently completed a year of filming in the area including locations in Alvechurch, the Lickey Hills and Rowney Green.

The Shamrock Spitfire has been produced by Nigel Davey of Cofton Hackett, and written and directed by Ian and Dominic Higgins from Hopwood. The team were also joined by Hanbury producer John Dawson.

The film focuses on fighter ace "Spitfire Paddy" who famously flew with a Shamrock emblem on the side of his aircraft.

The team hired Spitfires, Tiger Moths and had a cast of 150 actors, a much bigger venture than the originally planned 20-minute short film. However, soon after script-writing began, it became clear they couldn't condense this tale to 20 minutes and needed to develop a feature-length film to tell the story properly and give it the justice it deserved.

A high flying success: The cast and crew stand with one of the aircraft used in filming.

Nigel said: "We knew this feature film would be our biggest yet but we were not prepared for the amazing reaction and support that came our way from all over the UK and also the trailer getting nearly half a million views.

"The whole crew had to pull together on some long days either in the heat of summer or the freezing cold days of winter, and so many lovely people in our area going the extra mile for us in helping to get this onto the big screen."

The team were keen to use the wealth of talent in the Midlands. Dominic said: "We were determined from the start to tap into that.

"The film's been three years in development, so it was a lot of blood, sweat and tears, but we wouldn't have been able to make it without the dedication and passion of everyone involved."

Ian added: "We're bringing the iconic Spitfire back to its Midlands home and in doing so are helping to introduce the story of Spitfire Paddy and his Flying Shamrock to a new generation."

You won't have to wait long to see the locally-made film for yourself. *The Shamrock Spitfire* will be out early next year and now has a promise of worldwide distribution.

For updates, visit Pixel Revolution Films. There are still opportunities for individuals or companies to sponsor the project. Contact: info@pixelrevolutionfilms.com

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20 From The Village archive Years Ago

AAH, those were the days, when thousands of people – or revellers, as we always called them – would gather outside The Crown Inn, Withybed Green, and walk the streets noisily as part of Alvechurch Alight. The magazine also carried lots of pictures from the other festival events (below), and a list of all the winners in the Craft and Produce show, including the current Editor of the magazine (then aged 12) for her decorated fairy cakes!

ALSO IN THE NEWS: More than 300 villagers signed a petition calling for action on "antisocial behaviour" in Alvechurch and urging a more visible police presence in the evenings. It led to the formation of a Residents' Action Group, which met with police and Bromsgrove council officials.

VILLAGE stalwart Forest Hansen said goodbye to return to his native United States with his wife Val. Forest had, among other roles, been the parish footpaths officer and secretary to Alvechurch Village Society.

10 From The Village archive Years Ago

OUR OCTOBER 2013 cover featured a fox cub taken by Barnt Green nature photographer Tim Hunt on the railway embankment between Barnt Green and Alvechurch. By the time the magazine came out, the foxes' den had been cleared to make way for rail work. "I just hope they managed to get out in time," Tim told *The Village*.

A WELSH SLATE plaque was installed in the village centre garden that had become a focus for tributes to Alvechurch teacher Peter Rippington after the school ski coach crash in France the previous year. The Ffstiniog slate was supplied by Tom Molloy, whose three children were all helped through school by "Mr Rip" and Sharon Rippington had the tribute to her husband engraved into it. It was unvelied (above) by Sharon, Tom and Pete's mother, Lorna Sage.

RETIRED BUSINESSMAN Doug Clark met many old friends and employees while signing copies of his autobiography *Belt and Braces*, including Dot Kambilis, still working pump duties at the Lickey top petrol station.

A GROUP of *Village*-area cyclists celebrate reaching the Arc de Triomph after riding from London to Paris to raise money for the Cardiomyopathy Association.

...25 years ago!

THE FIRST issue of *The VIllage* in October 1998 was a shot in the dark as a business, but had a bright beginning with the amazing Alvechurch Alight lantern procession on its front cover.

The community spirit flowing from this annual event was the inspiration for starting a magazine to cover all of the villages of this area and the many things going on in them.

There will be plenty of thirty-somethings reading this who remember with fondness the weeks of workshops leading up to Alvechurch Alight and then the excitement over the three days of the festival.

Eventually, it became too popular and too big to maintain, especially as each year brought more hoops to jump through and the strain on the volunteers running it grew too much.

There have been many other community events around the villages since, but perhaps none as memorable as Alvechurch Alight.

Meanwhile, the magazine that was born in that flush of late-nineties optimism is still here, hoping we are again heading towards more enlightened times after a decade and a half of austerity and chaos.

When the first issue of *The VIllage* came out, I was in my 30s . . . I'm now pushing towards my mid-60s. How can it have been so long? And how come this magazine is still here?

If the chances of scraping through a global financial meltdown were slim, the likelihood of surviving a pandemic that took our deliverers off the streets was even less likely.

And throughout the whole of the past 25 years we have watched online competition thrive on the back of free content – with hardly any costs of production or distribution, unlike a printed magazine.

Yet, here we still are.

There are plenty of righteous reasons I could list for this, such as continuing to ask awkward questions while real local journalism disappears before our eyes – unaffordable (and perhaps unwelcome) in the digital talking-shops many people call their "news" providers.

But I think it is the medium itself that has ensured the longevity of *The VIllage*.

As everything else has become so ephemeral, so easy to produce and to publish digitally that no one knows what or whom to trust, a printed publication in your hands in the real world has so much more value.

Publisher **Richard Peach** muses on the quarter of a century since he brought out issue #1 of *The Village*.

Certainly, our advertisers appear to believe this – and experience it. Online clicks and "likes" are all very well, but mean nothing to a business compared with a phone call or email saying, "I've seen your advert in *The Village* . . ."

In fact, it was the demand from advertisers that prevented my near-retirement three years ago after we had been shut down for months by the pandemic.

They were missing a way to reach the people of this area – and the people of this area were telling us they missed *The Village*.

Now minus the two full-time staff who had done so much over the previous decade or two, the magazine creaked into action, backed by our wonderful contributors, eager to get back into print.

The return proved to be fortuitous on a personal level because soon after this, with motherhood looming, my elder daughter Fran saw running a business in her home village of Alvechurch as an attractive proposition.

As she'd been involved from the start and was already in a similar line of work, it looked like a good idea – and after her first year in charge, I have now returned to the back seat, where I'm sure I belong after a quarter of a century.

There are certainly many challenges ahead, most pressing the cost of printing the magazine, which has soared since the pandemic and is yet to return to a sustainable level.

Then there are the tough economic conditions almost everyone is experiencing at the moment, which is why we've tried not to pass on the full extent of our increased costs to advertisers.

Will *The Village* still be here in another 25 years? It would be nice to think so – and it would be even better if I was still around to see it. But maybe that really is too much to ask!

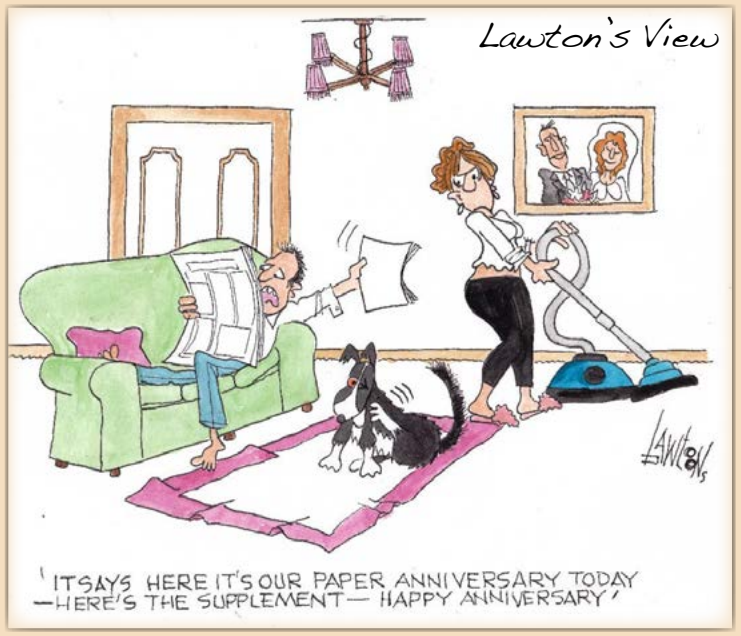
Support the Nimbys

Dear Editor – John Impey's letter "No Nimby negativity" last month missed the point by a country mile – and then some.

"Nimby" is a term created by avaricious "developers" in order to discredit those who value where they live, and do not want all their green fields covered in: ticky tacky, quick buck, housing estates.

As Bordesley's advance on Alvechurch gathers pace, he may soon be wishing that he had not maligned these "Nimbys", but joined and supported them.

Peter McHugh, Alvechurch



Thank you for the reminder

Dear Editor – Thank you Councillor Adrian Kriss for your letter in the September issue of *The Village*.

You are so right Barnt Green has a wonderful variety of small local shops and businesses.

But that brings in people who either don't think, or are unaware that there are a considerable number of elderly and disabled people who can use double yellow lines and do use the disabled bays which, quite a few times a day, are used by those with no badges.

We also have a considerable number of partially sighted shoppers so please don't park over their crossing points.

Adrian also reminded drivers not to cause an obstruction on pavements or partially block entrances to resident driveways.

Please think – we have pushchairs and disabled scooters who use pavements and I can say my drive can be very difficult to get out of due to unsociable parking as many others are in my road!

Rachel Banner, Barnt Green

Portway gets VAR

Dear Editor – At last, Portway in Beoley gets its long-awaited speed calming device for Alcester Road. The VAR speed limited sign was promised to Portway residents by County Councillor Luckman back in July 2022 - 14 months ago.

The "wheels of bureaucracy" certainly move slowly.

Portway residents have continued to lobby their local, district and county councillor for more than three years to put in place measures to help reduce excessive speeding through Portway.

Finally a VAR signage has been installed that is clearly visible to motorists leaving the busy A435 at Portway and will both warn motorists of their speed and record data on excessive speeding.

Paul Bridgewater, Portway

Station frustration

Dear Editor – I expect that you will receive several letters like this.

August has passed and there is no sign of action to install the promised pedestrian lifts at Barnt Green station..

Broken promises, delays and obfuscation are part of life when dealing with large organisations, which individuals have to forebear.

What is the new promised date for work to begin?

Frustrated, Barnt Green

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Please include your name and address – even if you request them to be withheld from publication. We reserve the right to edit submissions for reasons of space or legality.

The deadline for the next issue is October 10th 2023.

WHERE'S VINNY?

CROWN Meadow First School pupil Finley Crackle, aged four, from Alvechurch, shows off the Mini Vinny he won for finding the little creature in September's hunt the hedgehog competition in *The Village*.

If you want to win one for yourself, you'll need to try to find the little hedgehog hiding somewhere in this magazine (the one shown above is just a guide).

Tell us where he's hiding via email – see details on bottom of the page opposite – and please include your name, address and phone number, and we'll draw a winner at random.

The closing date is midnight on October 10 2023. We'll let you know if you've won and you can collect your Mini Vinny from our office – and pose for a photo with your prize!

Festival thank you

Dear Editor – I was initially disappointed to learn that Alvechurch's Scarecrow Festival wasn't returning this year.

Not only is it a fantastic (and cheap!) day out for the family but it really promotes the feeling of community in our village, it's lovely to see families out and about to see them.

The fact that the festival also takes place over the course of a week means that Alvechurch isn't inundated with visitors all at once -

– which I have recently learned is something to be very grateful for!

I recently went to Belbroughton Scarecrow Festival (which takes place over one weekend) in lieu of Alvechurch, and I have to say there was no comparison.

It cost £20 for parking! Although I appreciate this went towards charities, £20 is a ludicrous amount to charge (and then the £10 to enter the "kids" area).

Their village event was much more commercialised than Alvechurch, which has an air of a more traditional and quaint village festival.

So, I just wanted to give thanks to the organisers of Alvechurch's Scarecrow Festival who have put in such a lot of hard work over recent years, I hope they enjoy a rest this year and I hope to see it back next year (I'm sure I'm not alone there!).

Thankful, Alvechurch

Paddington: From 2022's festival.

Who left this?

Dear Editor – Is this acceptable?

Disgusted, Alvechurch

King's stay at the top

King's Worcester are proud to have been recognised once again for their outstanding education provision for students in the *Independent Schools of the Year Awards* 2023.

KING'S Worcester's outstanding co-educational provision has been recognised for the second year running in the prestigious *Independent School Parent* magazine awards.

The school has reached the final of the *Independent Schools of the Year Awards 2023*, which showcase the very best of independent school education.

The highly regarded annual awards, which received more than 1,000 entries from UK independent schools, celebrate the extraordinary student experiences provided over the last year.

All three of the King's Schools, King's Worcester and King's Hawford and King's St Alban's Prep Schools, were shortlisted back in July for a total of four awards, and they were thrilled to hear this week that King's Worcester has been named as finalists for the second year running in the Co-education Independent School of the Year category.

King's sits alongside some of the most highly regarded leading independent boarding schools including Brighton College, Charterhouse and Royal Hospital School, and are the only day school to appear in the final.

The finalist news is another fantastic achievement for King's Worcester, alongside the recognition for a second year in *The Sunday Times* Top 10 West Midlands Independent Secondary School league.

Gareth Doodes, Headmaster at King's Worcester, said: "This is outstanding news for the start of our new academic year. We were over the moon earlier in the summer to hear that all three schools had been shortlisted in many categories, so this news that our Senior School, King's Worcester, is in the final is truly thrilling.

Outstanding achievement: A-Level students celebrate their results.

Finalists: Heads of school proudly display their finalist award, with King's students.

"It is a great tribute to our ethos of inclusion and empowerment that our schools, staff and pupils have been recognized at a national level for our impressive co-educational provision.

"We are honoured that our inspiring and well-rounded provision has brought us to the final selection."

The winners of the *Independent Schools of the Year 2023 Awards* will be announced at an awards ceremony in October.

Join King's at their forthcoming Open Morning to discover why King's are finalists.

King's Worcester

Independent education for boys and girls aged 2-18

King's Open Mornings.

Pupils flourish across the King's Foundation of Schools. They are inspired by a classroom full of good friends, a team of dedicated teachers and a supportive caring environment. We seek to raise kind, ambitious, and curious children who have the determination and resilience to achieve their very best and more.

Join us to discover more:

Senior & Sixth Saturday 30th September
King's Hawford Prep Friday 6th October
King's St Alban's Prep Saturday 7th October

To find out more visit: ksw.org.uk/shapedbykings
Extensive school minibus transport network including Bromsgrove, Alvechurch, Barnt Green and Droitwich.

£350 seating arrangement

Big cheque: Coun Marc Worrall (in his official chain) presents the grant to (from left) Tom and Ann Thurrell and Peter Joannides, of the Hopwood Village Hall committee.

HOPWOOD village hall was awarded a grant of £350 by Alvechurch Parish Council, which the village hall committee put towards the renovation of their outdoor space.

Two bright, rainbow benches complete the new astroturf garden, which provides a wonderful space for parties, celebrations and outdoor gatherings.

Coun Marc Worrall, chairman of Alvechurch Parish Council, visited the new space to present some members of the committee with the cheque.

If you would like to book the space for an event, please contact Ann Thurrell, booking secretary, on 0121 447 7668 or at annthurrell@hotmail.co.uk.

Local art to enjoy – and buy!

FOLLOWING the recent success of the Worcestershire Open Studios, Alvechurch-based artist Jane Aston will be joining The North Worcestershire Art Collective for another exhibition.

The exhibition by eight local artists is at The Artery Studios, Arch 28/29 Croft Walk, Worcester WR1 3BD, from Friday 27 October until Wednesday 1 November 10am-4pm and is free to enter.

The North Worcestershire Art Collective will then be exhibiting their artwork together once again at Blackwell Community Hall, between 25-26 November from 10am-4pm.

Both exhibitions provide the opportunity for local art investors and collectors to buy original art and prints from this talented group of artists, or for those who are interested or simply love art to go along and enjoy the exhibition.

There will also be plenty of opportunities to chat to the artists while enjoying their work.

The events are open to all, and visitors will receive a warm welcome.

STAR CARE HOME STAFF

An outstanding receptionist at *Cofton Park Manor* has been shortlisted for an award to recognise her hard work, reflecting the high quality care that all staff at Cofton Park Manor provide.

From left: Kerry Hill, Home Manager; Diane Riach, Receptionist; and Wendy Sibley, Business Administrator celebrate Diane's achievements.

DELIGHTED staff at a local care home are celebrating after their very own receptionist was shortlisted in the *Great British Care Awards*.

Diane Riach, who has worked at Cofton Park Manor Care Home since it opened in January, is thrilled about reaching the West Midlands regional finals in the prestigious awards in the Ancillary Worker category.

She said: "I love my job here at Cofton Park Manor and it is wonderful to meet and greet everyone who comes through our doors.

"Cofton Park Manor is home to all of us and we are very fortunate to have such amazing residents supported by a lovely staff team."

Diane welcomes dozens of people through the doors every day as well as taking large volumes of calls.

"A key part of the job is to treat everyone with respect and ensure that everyone feels good about every aspect of the service we provide," Diane added.

"I cannot wait to go along on the night and to meet others who are committed to the care sector."

The Great British Care Awards are a series of regional events throughout the UK and Diane has been shortlisted in the West Midlands regional finals.

The Ancillary Worker award recognises those who offer an excellent person-centred service to clients. Nominees understand and demonstrate treating each person as an individual, as well as showing a special pride in their work among other factors.

The event is a celebration of excellence across the care sector. The awards pay tribute to individuals who have demonstrated outstanding excellence within their field of work.

There are 21 categories representing all areas of the social care sector.

The West Midlands regional finals will be held on November 4 at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham.

To find out more about the luxury care home, and their exclusive offer for new residents, Call 01213 872722 or Email enquiries@hamberleycarehomes.co.uk
Cofton Park Manor
466 Lickey Road
Cofton Hackett
B45 8UU

Alvechurch Parish Council

serving Alvechurch, Bordesley, Hopwood, Rowney Green and Weatheroak

Parish news

Alvechurch Parish Council has been busy despite the August Recess...

Staff and residents at Austin Rose care home on the southern edge of Kings Norton were delighted that Cllr Marc Worrall, Chairman to Alvechurch Parish Council, was able to accept their invitation to attend the 'welcome party' for the new centre manager on August 24th and specifically to meet some residents that used to live in the Parish of Alvechurch.

Cllr Worrall, who attended the Centre for an informal buffet lunch, enjoyed meeting staff and some residents. He had the pleasure of speaking to five former Alvechurch residents and presented them with a small memento of his visit which was a small album of specially selected photos taken around the Parish.

Cllr Worrall commented: "It was a privilege to meet the residents and I feel blessed to have been in their company. After the last few years we have all endured, and knowing what personal sacrifices staff in care homes throughout the country have made as part of their role in caring for their residents, I feel honoured to have been invited to attend such an event."

Belisa Dushku, on behalf of Austin Rose Care Home, said: "It was lovely to be able to host this event and for Cllr Worrall to join us to have a tour of our facilities and meet residents and staff, we really enjoyed his visit. We hope he will be able to come back and see us again soon."

Congratulations to our Assistant Clerk!

We are proud to announce that our Assistant Parish Clerk, Fay Murphy, has achieved the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification and was presented with a bouquet of flowers recently by APC's Chairman, Cllr Marc Worrall.

The National Training Strategy has developed a customised qualification for the sector, the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA). This core skills qualification is awarded to those who submit a portfolio of evidence, demonstrating the skills they have in local council administration.

Worcester Birmingham & Droitwich Canals Society Donation

Cllr Worrall, Chairman Alvechurch Parish Council presented a donation, remarking; "I was pleased to be able to present this cheque to such a worthy cause that brings much joy to so many, as well as introducing them to our local canals and the beautiful scenery of Worcestershire which our Parish is located in."

Welcome to our new Members

The following councillors have recently joined Alvechurch Parish Council;

Cllrs; Susan Lambert (Alvechurch Village Ward), Brett Shepherd (Alvechurch Village Ward), Nigel Cuttress (Alvechurch Village Ward), Barry Thornton (Rowney Green & Bordesley Ward).

The Parish Council is now at full complement. If you would like to read a little more about each of our Members, please visit our website **https://www.alvechurch.gov.uk/**

Brett Shepherd

Barry Thornton

Nigel Cuttress

Susan Lambert

Disabled Parking Bay – Polite Notice

The Parish Council wishes to advise residents and visitors that enforcement action will now be taken in relation to the mis-use of the disabled bays in and around the village centre.

Useful contacts

Alvechurch Village

Peter Freeman
Sue Lambert
Tony Williams
Keith Wiseman
Marc Worrall
Brett Shepherd
Nigel Cuttress

Hopwood

Paul Edwards
Samantha Lewis

Rowney Green and Bordesley

Rachael Bailes
Stephen Hornsby
Barry Thornton

Alvechurch Parish Council

serving Alvechurch, Bordesley, Hopwood, Rowney Green and Weatheroak

Have your say

We're keen to receive your comments or queries; do please contact the Parish Office if you wish to discuss any matter.

APC office

Jayne Smailes
Clerk / Responsible Financial Officer
clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk

Fay Murphy
Assistant Clerk
assistantclerk@alvechurch.gov.uk

Call us on **0121 447 8016**

Email **clerk@alvechurch.gov.uk**

www.alvechurch.gov.uk

/AlvechurchParishCouncil

Lickey & Blackwell Parish Council News

Newsletter Autumn 2023

Summer Events

We held our Annual Helper's Meal on 5th June this year to thank all of our fantastic helpers for supporting the work of the Parish Council.

We were also able to thank three long serving outgoing Councillors - Jill Harvey, Peter Harvey and Janet King - and welcome our two new Councillors, Josh Gwilliam and Neil Schroeder.

Our Residents' Afternoon Tea went really well (pictured above), with around 50 residents enjoying some very tasty sandwiches and cakes.

Jill Harvey from the Lickey Hills Local History Society talked about Lickey history including the Roman Road and the Great Court. Councillor Bakul Kumar spoke about Blackwell history and buildings of note.

We also had an uplifting sing along with local Blackwell group The Cats Chorus!

This year's winners of the Best Front Garden competition were Mrs Lesley Edwards (pictured) for best Large Front Garden, Patricia Hovell for best Small/Medium Front Garden and Blackwell Community Garden.

Winner of 'Best Large Front Garden' Mrs Lesley Edwards (centre) receives her award from Councillor Nick Forknell and Councillor Bernice Jones.

Prizes were awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places.

Congratulations to all!

Our winner Lesley Edwards said, "I was shocked and surprised that my garden was noticed and appreciated by others as much as by me".

Above: Enjoying the Annual Helpers' Meal.

Christmas in the Parish

Christmas is fast approaching!

Now is the time for all Lickey and Blackwell children to get thinking about entering our Christmas Competition and this year's theme is "Your favourite Christmas song/carol".

Please draw a picture of your favourite and send it in to Lisa, our Executive Officer, at The Trinity Centre office, Lickey, or you can hand in your entry at Lickey or Blackwell schools.

The closing date is 15th Nov. Entries will be judged, and the winners announced at our annual Christmas events, which will be 10th December in Lickey and 8th December in Blackwell this year.

New Councillor

We were delighted to welcome our newly co-opted Councillor Anwen White to her first full Parish Council meeting on 18th September.

Anwen is a doctor working in Birmingham and moved to the Parish ten years ago with her husband.

She has three young children and became a Councillor to become more involved with the local community and help to continue making this area a safe and happy place for her children to grow up in.

Contact Us

Lisa Winterbourn, our executive officer, may be contacted on: eo@lickeyandblackwellpc.org or: 07930 837770. Much more council information may be found at: www.lickeyandblackwellpc.org or facebook.com/lickeyandblackwellcouncil

Words & pictures by Keith Woolford

BLACKWELL BEATS IN THE HEAT

Lost in the music: Dancing to 'Lucas D and the Groove Ghetto'.

The Precursors: Get the crowd up on their feet for a dance in the summer sunshine.

THE much anticipated Blackwell Music Festival returned on a scorching heatwave weekend in September.

A record crowd of around 900 festival goers attended the event, held for the second year at their new site in Blackwell.

The festival was managed by a team of volunteers, led by Emma Westwood.

Katie Knight,introduced the seven bands, who played a wide range of music to ensure there was something for everyone.

There was plenty to do for all the family, with independent food wagons, a beer tent and a range of fantastic bands and artists.

First up on the stage was Indigo Kid, consisting of four young musicians aged from 12 to 16.

The Kazoos, The Bizz', Lucas D and the Groove Ghetto and The Precursors followed, keeping the crowd entertained, before The Strand came on stage.

A kids' zone ensured that children were kept entertained with a bouncy castle and equipment for developing their circus skills. Face and glitter painting made sure that children and adults alike were kitted out in full festival style.

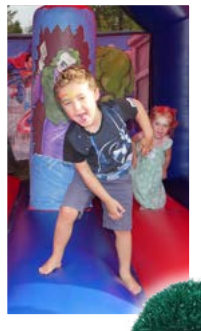
As the sun went down, Killerstream Weekend Anthems got everyone up and dancing. A surprise addition was when Mia Martin, daughter of one of the band, performed a rendition of The Zutons classic *Valerie*.

By the time the sun went down, with the balmy heat lingering, all festival-goers went home happy. All proceeds of the festival will go towards hosting future community events.

Beers up: The festival bar crew.

A busy festival ground.

Lucas D and the Ghetto Groove.



Above: The Kazoos with some fans.

Right: Having fun!

Far left: Indigo Kid look effortlessly cool.

Left: Bouncing fun.

The Bizz on stage.

The Strands.

Ascott's food truck.

Glitter for all!

Words & pictures by Keith Woolford

Boiling hot beer festival

RECENT winner of the CAMRA's Pub of the Year 2023 (Redditch and Bromsgrove), The Weighbridge Inn opened its doors, marquees and beer taps once again for its popular beer festival.

This time, as well as the blissful early autumn sun, there were 45 real ales, half a dozen craft beers and almost 20 ciders to enjoy.

The event was accompanied by Morris sides and live music to entertain visitors while they enjoyed a drink and a bap.

Town cryer Kevin Ward, was invited to formally welcome those who attended and was enlisted to ensure that the beer was suitable for all. Needless to say, Kevin thoroughly executed his obligations.

Winners: Chris Lamb (centre) with The Weighbridge staff, proudly display their CAMRA award.

Midland Sinfonia celebrates

The Midland Sinfonia social members gather for a photo. **Right:** Shulah Oliver scores!

HAVING concluded another successful season of concerts at their base of St Laurence Church in Alvechurch, the trustees of the Midland Sinfonia held their Annual Garden Party to celebrate.

A wonderful afternoon of Pimms and lunch was followed by a competitive game of croquet on the lawn.

A good-natured event of four teams of two saw Shulah Oliver, the TMS Director of Music, saying that the winners were "just lucky".

She went on to say that her team "displayed an inordinate amount of skill but after some dodgy gamesmanship from the opposition came a gallant second on the final drive".

It was unanimously agreed Sarah and Simon Carless, who hosted the event at their home, did a marvellous job and it was a fitting conclusion to a spectacular series of concerts.

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WHAT'S PLAGUING PESTILENCE LANE?

Local historian and author, Anne Bradford, whose stories we've featured previously, published the following tale. She was told about this strange encounter in Rowney Green which is included in her book *Worcestershire, the haunted county.*

THE small village of Rowney Green is a picturesque, hamlet, which, although close to the M42 has managed to keep its rural identity.

Industries in the area are few, but the British Cast Iron Research Association (BCIRA) which was founded in 1924 used to be one of them.

The man who told this story is about 17 stone, with muscles, and has tattoos all over his body, and the thought of him having a weep stretches the imagination. He said: "When i was a kid i used to work at BCIRA, at Bordesley Hall in Rowney Green, up the Holloway.

"One dark night, I was with a young lady in a Mini in a little lane nearby. The car was stationary and I won't go into detail about what we were doing.

"Suddenly, a little light appeared round the bend so we both stopped and looked. First of all we thought it was a pushbike headlamp but as it came nearer it appeared to be somebody with a lantern. Whoever was carrying the lantern was swinging so that as it went along it wrote a series of ellipses.

"It came nearer and nearer and when I saw it close by I thought I was going to cry. For the figure was ten feet tall and the lantern swung high over the roof of the Mini. Then it disappeared, the banks were really steep and there was nowhere it could have gone.

"I found an old farmyard where I could turn around and drove away. A few days later I was telling an old guy about it and he said 'Well, you know where you were parked, don't you?'

"I said 'No' and he answered 'In Pestilence Lane.'"

The eerie encounter this couple had on Pestilence Lane is made more chilling by the significance of Pestilence Lane itself.

Local folklore and stories of the history of Alvechurch and the surrounding areas claim that half the population of Alvechurch was wiped out by the Black Death, when bubonic plague spread across Europe in the 14th century.

The location of where the bodies are rumoured to have been buried in a mass burial site? You've guessed

Ten feet of terror on Pestilence Lane.
Image: Sally Oldaker.

it – on Pestilence Lane. This is how the road is thought to have become known as Pestilence Lane, due to the unfortunate folk buried there.

When the M42 was built, there was such a concern about the possibility of a mass grave that Pestilence Lane was examined and checked for contagious diseases which may have been trapped in the soil.

Other local rumours suspect objectors to the construction of the motorway spread these stories in order to sabotage building works.

However, nothing concerning was discovered on Pestilence Lane – but if a burial site does exist, then it's likely that Hopwood Park services now sits on top of it.

We heard from a *Village* reader, who contacted us about a creepy moment she had while walking near the site:

"Years ago now, I was about sixteen and had been at a party in Hopwood, myself and a couple of friends thought it would be great idea to walk home to Alvechurch, rather than disturb our parents (and suffer the consequences).

"It was summer so it felt quite warm, and we had to walk off some of the alcohol anyway. We didn't really know where we were going so headed in the vague direction of Alvechurch, from the Hopwood services.

"We crossed over the main road by the roundabout on the motorway, and cut through into a field shortly after. After walking for a little while entered a field, somewhere between Pestilence Lane and Old Rectory Lane.

"The field was very still and the moonlight shone across it. Then, my friend pointed out, in the far corner of the field, there was a figure.

"We all stopped. It was far enough away that we couldn't make out who it was, just a black figure, like a shadow. But then it moved.

"We didn't stop to see any more. After that we ran as fast as we could for as long as we could before we came out on Rectory Lane, which in itself is a dark and quiet lane.

"Over the years we've wondered if maybe it was another party-goer just trying to get home and got lost (feel a bit guilty if we just ran off and left them in a field!) but needless to say I have never been back down there in the dark again."

THE MAN AT THE WELL

THERE was a row of canal cottages in Stoke Prior, near Whitford Riding Stables, and just below that was an old thatched cottage set in its own grounds.

Many years ago, in the 1980s, my friend and I used to run every Sunday morning, and we'd often run past the cottage.

One morning we ran past, talking, and we looked at the house as we ran, and we both stopped dead, having seen the same thing.

We had both seen a figure in this old garden with a stove hat, with an old farmer's smock on, tied around the middle, and he was at his water pump. He was grey-faced and thin.

When we stopped to turn around and have another look, there wasn't a soul there, he was gone. The pump was there but the figure wasn't.

We were absolutely dumbfounded. If it had just been me I wouldn't have dared recite it again because no one would believe it.

But we both saw the same figure. He was stood on an ash path between the pump and the cottage, where people used to throw their ash outside to make a path.

It was just like looking at a very, very, old man. He wasn't conscious of us at all, had no idea we were there and was just going about his business at his pump.

I've been past the house lots of times since, but not seen anything again. I was away from the area for several years, and when I came back discovered that someone had demolished the cottage, and in the grounds there is now a big detached house with gates on.

I often wonder if anyone there has had any visitations.

DB
Finstall

The night-time watcher

I HAVE a nasty habit of watching television late into the night. A glass of wine, some snacks and I'm set for the next nine hours. Horribly delightful, I know. I always thought it would catch up with me somehow . . . but not like this.

A month ago I binged a TV show and finished up around 3am. I turned off the TV, blankly staring at my reflection in the black screen but then I noticed something by my shoulder, hovering above me.

I leaned forward, to get a closer look.

I thought it might be a lamp, or something I had put up earlier that day and forgotten about, my heart slowly sinking in confused fear.

But in an instant it dropped to the floor, when I realised it was certainly not an object; it was alive and it was staring.

It looked like a person but it's features were stretched and distorted, like a spirit trying to imitate a person and getting it disgustingly wrong.

I felt something on my shoulder, not a touch but still a sensation of sorts, it was inhuman, felt more like paper than skin.

I spun around.

Nothing was there.

Hesitantly I got up from my seat, my legs shaking, and walked to my room.

Firmly nestled between my pillows and tucked under my quilt, I wondered if I'd imagined it all.

These thoughts reoccur in the morning when I go into the living room and find nothing there. Not a clue or mystery, just.. nothing.

I make myself breakfast, get dressed and go to work, like it never happened.

For a somewhat humorous ending the events of this story haven't changed my evening TV binging habits.

When I told my cousin this story she grimly joked: "The devil himself could have come and told you to go to bed earlier and you still wouldn't have stopped!" And she isn't really wrong.

Although, these days whenever I finish up a show around the witching hour, I make sure to avert my eyes away from the screen when I turn it off. . . Just in case.

Creeped out villager,
By email

Half a century of rambling

BROMSGROVE Ramblers, founded in 1973 celebrated their 50th anniversary appropriately; a hardy band of ramblers walked a 50k route over four days around the Bromsgrove council boundary line.

Each stage of the walk was roughly eight miles in distance and consisted of walking from Wychbold to Lydiate Ash by way of Chaddesley Corbett; and then Lydiate Ash round to Wychbold by way of Tardebigge.

The weather generally stayed fair but many stiles were found to be in a poor state of repair – work now for their volunteer working parties!

Following this, they then threw an anniversary party to which many past members of the group were invited. Members of the group from past and present could reminisce and recount stories of past adventures.

The event was topped off with a toast to the future of the group and the cutting of a magnificently decorated celebratory cake, complete with walking boots and rucksack.

Bromsgrove Ramblers organise three regular local walks each month – one long (about 8-10 miles), one short (about 4-6 miles) and one shorter which will have some point of interest and may end at a pub or tea room (about 3-4 miles). They offer day coach trips further afield twice a year, travelling to destinations such as the Shropshire Hills or The Peak District and providing a choice of two hikes.

Half a century: Bromsgrove Ramblers celebrate a milestone.

The group also organises a couple of weekends away to popular walking destinations such as the Lake District, Snowdonia and Exmoor. There are also social events, such as summer pub rambles, quiz evenings and meals out.

The Ramblers help everyone, everywhere to enjoy walking and protects the places we all love to walk.

It is the only charity dedicated to looking after paths and green spaces, leading walks, opening up new places to explore and encouraging everyone to get outside and discover how walking boosts your health and your happiness.

A ramblers themed cake.

■ **For more information contact Group Secretary Peter on 07772 458130.**

Unsung heroes of the community

THREE "unsung heroes" were presented with awards by Alvechurch Parish Council at the September council meeting.

They were nominated by villagers after the council decided it wanted recognise people for their services to the community. They thanked those who "worked quietly behind the scenes with a positive attitude, a willingness to help in whatever capacity necessary and a commitment in doing so, to a high standard".

The three heroes were David Shoesmith (pictured centre, left) for his work with Alvechurch Larder, who said: "We are a community and the larder has enhanced the community, so thank you for this."

Sarah Courbet (pictured top left) for Picnic in the Park and her running of a community Facebook group. Parish councillor Samantha Lewis said while presenting the award: "She's always doing something for someone else."

Matthew Evans (pictured bottom left) also received an award for his work as the parish caretaker, he said: "In my mind, I'm just doing my job. I love where I live."

Going the distance

THE Long Distance Walkers Association is a group of walking enthusiasts, who challenge themselves occasionally to complete 100-mile walks in a single weekend.

This year, to mark their 50th challenge, they set a route that passed through Alvechurch.

The walk was called the "Elephant, Bear and Bull 100" after the traditional symbols of Coventry, Warwickshire and Birmingham.

Walkers started at 10am on Saturday at Moseley Rugby Club, and passed though Northfield, Rubery, Withybed, Alvechurch, Tanworth-in-Arden, Henley-in-Arden, Aston Cantlow, Stratford-Upon-Avon, Norton Lindsey, Warwick, Kenilworth, Coventry, Meriden, Barston, Solihull and back to Moseley.

A cut-off time for completing the route was just 48 hours later, at 10am on Monday. Runners and fast walkers had a later start, and even less time!

After the highly successful event, with nearly 500 participants, the leader of the walk contacted Alvechurch Village Society, to compliment the AVS Footpath Group on their excellent maintenance of the paths and bridleways around the village.

He commented: "On a walk of that distance we pass through various different areas, and it's always clear which has a group looking after them and which don't.

"Walkers always appreciate not having to negotiate broken stiles and rickety bridges!"

The association also made a substantial donation to the AVS footpath group.

The footpath group is organized by Adrian Smith, WCC Footpath Warden for the Alvechurch parish.

The group meet – weather permitting – every other Saturday morning from March to October.

Adrian is always happy to hear from new volunteers, and you can expect a couple of hours of work, in return for chat, coffee and biscuits, and some end up at the Weighbridge afterwards.

ALVECHURCH PARISH REMEMBERS

St Laurence Church, Alvechurch Parish Council and the Alvechurch Services Association have come together to plan a service for Remembrance Sunday. Representatives from our community have been invited to take part as Alvechurch Parish Remembers together.

Please note that Bear Hill will be closed to traffic up to Snake Lane between 10.30am - 12pm

On 11th November there will be no formal Act of Remembrance at Memorial Green, although you may wish to gather for a time of quiet reflection.

Sunday 12th November

St Laurence Church at 10.15am and at the Memorial Green from 10.45am.

Too early for Christmas?

WHERE did summer go? It might have been the lack of the sun and warm weather (with the exception of the week of early autumn sun and hot weather we recently experienced), but it feels like the evenings are suddenly darker and everything is thoroughly autumnal.

That being said, this is your official reminder to start thinking about Christmas (we know, we know!).

It's too early, we hear you say. And while we agree, when it comes to the seasonal treats in the shops – we've not even had Halloween yet – it's the perfect time to start booking in your festive beauty appointments.

If you ask your hairdresser, it's likely that they will confirm that some of their clients have now booked their Christmas cut and colour. As always, from November, you'll probably find it more and more difficult to get appointments with your favourite therapists, at least at peak times in the evenings.

So, whether it's your festive nails, an eyebrow tidy or pre-Christmas haircut, don't delay and check in with your salons today.

On a similar vein of booking appointments, we all know there isn't really a "quiet before the storm" when it comes to Christmas and the lead-up to it (Christmas shopping, cooking, parties, nativities . . . the list is endless). If there is an appointment you've been putting off, or know you need to book before things get very VERY busy, consider this your reminder.

For example, if you've been thinking for a while something doesn't feel right, for example symptoms of perimenopause, contraception choices or PMS, don't wait, contact a clinic like VHK (read more on the opposing page) and get it sorted before Christmas.

You deserve to relax and enjoy the festive period, or at least – if yours is going to be as busy as ours at *The Village* is looking – survive it!

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PMS: What to do about it?

Dr Heidi Kerr and Dr Vicky Hobbs, from **VHK Women's Health Clinic**, discuss Premenstrual syndrome and its symptoms. They tell *The Village* what's normal, what you can do to alleviate PMS symptoms, and when you might consider seeking help.

PREMENSTRUAL syndrome is a recognised condition that can affect personal relationships and interfere with normal daily life.

About 90% of women will experience mild symptoms at some point during their reproductive life, but a third will have moderate to severe symptoms.

Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD) a very severe form and is classified as a psychiatric disorder affecting 2% of women. The condition is diagnosed by listening to a woman's symptoms over the course of her monthly cycle and understanding how these impact on her daily life.

The symptoms will start during the luteal phase (after ovulation and before the period) and resolve when her period arrives. Whilst the exact aetiology is unknown, science has confirmed it is likely to be due to rising progestogen levels and rapidly changing oestrogen levels which occurs pre-menstrually, postnatally and during the perimenopause.

Common symptoms are mood swings with irritability, anger outbursts, increased anxiety and feelings of being out of control. Often sleep is affected and food cravings can occur. Breast tenderness, bloating, weight gain, headaches and back pain are regular issues for many.

A symptoms diary completed over a minimum of two cycles is recommended, where symptoms can be charted along with bleeding days and a diagnosis can be confirmed. This can be done using a notebook by the side of the bed, or with one of the many symptom apps now available.

Treatment can either be with medication or lifestyle and dietary interventions aiming to improve symptoms and so, quality of life.

Self- management includes regular exercise, limiting alcohol and caffeine intake, and ensuring a disciplined sleep regime tailored to the specific time of the cycle.

PMS : Will affect up to 90% of women at some point in their lives.
Image: Shutterstock.

We would always advocate a healthy varied diet and whilst there is limited research to support supplements use, magnesium, Vitamin B6 and vitamin D appear to have some benefit.

Being kind to yourself to reduce stress especially around this time of the month is important and some women will require cognitive behavioural therapy, which can reduce the functional impact of the emotional symptoms

Medication options can be divided into hormonal treatment or non-hormonal.

The combined contraceptive pill, taken continuously, works to suppress the natural monthly hormonal fluctuations by preventing ovulation.

For women who are peri-menopausal, HRT in the form of transdermal oestrogen and body identical progesterone has also shown to be effective.

The non-hormonal option is the use of antidepressants called SSRIs taken either daily or just for the 2 weeks prior to the period. This option carries the greatest benefit in terms of research and is recommended as first line treatment.

More complex medical treatment for women with severe symptoms includes medications to halt ovarian function which can put women into a medically induced menopausal state for which they can then be given HRT. This treatment is only usually considered when all other treatment options have failed and requires careful consideration.

The most important aspect of this condition is having the time for assessment, diagnosis and understanding the treatment options available to you as an individual.

At VHK Women's Health we can offer a full assessment and holistic approach to every woman.

To make an appointment with VHK Women's Health Clinic please visit: www.vhkwomenshealth.com

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Meet the Team

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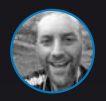
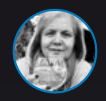


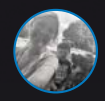
Martin Pryor
Financial Planner & Adviser

Business & Finance degree to Graduate training course at Prudential, leading to becoming a qualified independent financial adviser in 1996 and setting up PPM Financial Planning in 2006.



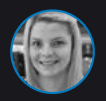
Nicky Lowndes
General Manager

Nicky has been at PPM Financial Planning since the very beginning in 2006 bringing with her 19 years of banking experience with HSBC.



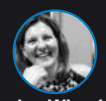
Laura Siddall
Financial Planner & Adviser

Laura has 19 years of industry experience. Her role is to construct financial plans for clients using our cash flow modelling software, helping deliver true financial planning.



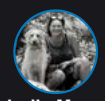
Laura Daniels
Mortgage Adviser

Laura joined in 2016, providing admin support whilst completing training to become our qualified mortgage broker.



Louise Wheeler
Paraplanner

Louise Joined PPM in September 2021, bringing with her 8 years of paraplanning experience and 13 years working within financial services.



Jodie Morey
Office Administrator

Jodie joined PPM from an accountancy background and performs a variety of tasks in the day to day running of the business.

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Regret minimisation: a decision-making tool

Martin Pryor tells *The Village* how our financial decisions can lead to future regrets, and what tools we can use to make better choices.

FINANCIAL planning has a feedback loop longer than most other disciplines. The consequences of our decisions can take decades before they become fully evident to us. This period can be filled with uncertainty, doubt, and the fear of making mistakes.

Having seen many people arrive at retirement with less than they need, this reality is especially clear to us.

Unfortunately, human nature doesn't help the cause. Our instincts, perfected over centuries of survival, lead us to make suboptimal decisions that don't serve our interests in the modern world of money.

The result? Regret, not for us, but for our future selves who must deal with the consequences.

A NEW LENS: REGRET MINIMISATION

Regret is an unavoidable emotion in life, and it teaches us lessons that serve us well in the future. It is especially useful for activities where the feedback loop between decision and consequence is short.

However, when this feedback period becomes decades-long, as it often does with financial planning, it is wise to consider how to minimise future feelings of regret ahead of time rather than wait to learn the lessons the hard way.

This decision-making tool is one that the well-known founder of Amazon, Jeff Bezos, has often used. For example, he used it to decide to leave his high-paying job on Wall Street and start Amazon in the early days of the Internet. He sought to minimise the potential regrets he might have had later in life by seizing a unique opportunity, even though it meant taking on significant risks and uncertainties at the time.

While it may sound obvious that we should try to minimise future regret, it requires intentional thinking to view decisions through this framework. If not done intentionally, we will likely fall back on our default mode of prioritising current needs over future ones.

THE MINDSET AS A FINANCIAL PLANNING TOOL

Many financial decisions become easier to make when viewed through this framework as it forces us to place ourselves in the shoes of our future selves, allowing us to consider better the complex trade-offs that any financial decision involves.

Save more for retirement, or improve your daily life now?

Work hard now so that you can travel in retirement, or spend more time with the children while they are still living at home?

Stay in the well-paying job, or start the business you are passionate about?

Buy a new car, or send the children to private school?

We should always be on the lookout for mindsets and methods to become more familiar with our future identity, and considering what we will least regret is a powerful exercise. While it gives no guarantee that our decisions will turn out well, it forces us to ask more relevant questions about the tradeoffs involved.

LIFE IS NOT A DRESS REHEARSAL

Choosing the wrong meal for lunch may lead to frustration, but there will be many more opportunities to correct the decision. It's in the big decisions that we want to give ourselves the best chance of making smart and well-informed decisions.

Unfortunately, these decisions are the ones that come around infrequently and which most of us make only a few times in our lives.

Realising that any major regrets we end up with are ones we'll need to make peace with, we want all investors to have the best tools available when the big decisions present themselves.

Regret minimisation is a thinking tool every investor should become familiar with.

As financial advisers, we provide the technical insight needed to help make the right choice in many of the decisions you face, and we hope that they serve both your current circumstances and your future self.

Life is not a dress rehearsal, and when it comes to regrets, less is more.

Martin Pryor
Lifestyle Financial Planner

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Navigating the stormy mortgage waters

Mark Meads discusses how Village Financial have helped real people with their mortgage dilemmas.

WORRIED about your mortgage rates? Looking for some help and guidance?

Here are a couple of examples of how we've been helping clients through this rocky market:

MR & MRS S

Wanted to re-mortgage and also raise funds for home improvements. Their current fixed rate on their mortgage was due to finish in six months-time, so this gave us time to explore the best lending options for them.

We initially secured them a great rate, but also kept an eye on the market on their behalf throughout the six months and were able to transfer them onto an even better rate, before their old fixed rate matured.

JC & SP

First time buyers had been searching for the right property for ages, they finally found a new home they loved.

We secured the best mortgage option for them, based on their circumstances at the time.

Again we kept an eye on the market for them – and as they haven't completed yet we've managed to secure them an even better rate, saving them over £80 per month, for when their mortgage completes.

Mark Meads (right), is here to help guide you through the stormy seas of mortgages.

We pride ourselves on being proactive for our clients, to ensure we secure the best options available for you whatever your circumstances.

Our long-standing clients can also relax, safe in the knowledge that we always contact you well in advance of your rate maturity, to look at constantly getting you the best option for your mortgage.

If you would like an initial discussion to see how we can help, please contact us on: 0121 445 1227.
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Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage

Spinning to see stars

Amateur astronomer **Brian Watkiss** peers into the *Village* night sky.

AUTUMN is upon us (oh no!) and the nights are drawing in, especially with the clock change back to GMT on the 29th of October.

This does, however, mean we can start skywatching earlier and from the end of September onward the first stars are visible from about 7.30pm.

So, looking at this time, over in the west towards the sunset, just above the glow you can see Arcturus, at the bottom of the constellation of Boötes.

Then, turning left a little, looking high overhead, is the brightest star in the sky, Vega.

To the left of that is Deneb and below the pair of them, about halfway down to the horizon is Altair. These three stars making the famous Summer Triangle.

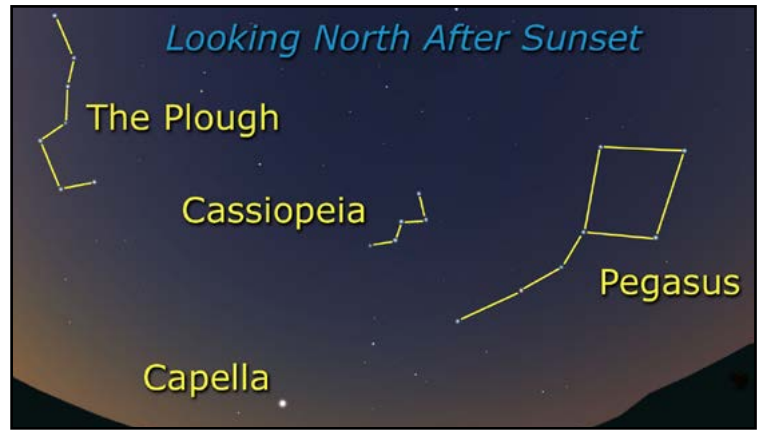
Left just slightly more and very close to the horizon is another star, not quite so bright as those already mentioned. This is actually the first of two planets we can see with the naked eye (surely your eyes are always naked?). Anyway, it is Saturn, that most spectacular of planets when observed through a telescope.

Continuing turning left, you may be able to make out a vague square of stars and left of that and a little higher, the wonky "W" of Cassiopeia.

A little further left and you will now be facing north, with the very bright star, Capella, not far above the horizon.

A little more left and higher is probably one of the most famous shapes in the the sky, the Big Dipper or The Plough. This is actually an asterism which simply means it is part of a larger constellation, in this case, the Great Bear or Ursa Major.

The Summer Triangle: Deneb, Vega and Altair.



A full sky: With darker skies in the evening, the stars will look different every few hours. *Pictures courtesy of NASA*.

You will now have rotated round almost completely, with Arcturus just to the left, assuming you haven't fallen over in the process.

If you make the same rotation one hour later at around 8.30pm, the sky will look very different. It is much darker, obviously but Arcturus is now closer to the horizon, disappearing at ten o'clock.

You should be able to see that Deneb is at the head of a cross of stars forming Cygnus, the Swan and Altair is part of a triangle of stars making Aquila, the Eagle.

Saturn will be higher and more obvious, the square of stars that is Pegasus will be more defined with some lines of stars trailing from the top corners and Cassiopeia being instantly recognisable.

Here though, is the biggest change because Jupiter has now risen below Pegasus and is very noticeable, being so bright.

It may still be a little too low so you might have to wait another hour or so to see our biggest, brightest planet.

You may well now be dizzy with excitement or, more likely, from the spinning round I have made you do but at least you know your way around our night sky.

SUMMER SUN, AT LAST

Alvechurch amateur weatherman **Phil Thomas** records the changes.

AUGUST was a slightly cooler month than average, not quite the summer we had been hoping for, and much cooler than 2022.

However, it ended up being a fairly average month, with a mean temperature of 16.3C recorded, which is 0.5C cooler than the local average.

The rainfall in August made up only 70% of the month's average, and sunshine was also near average with 161.2 hours which is 104% of the average August sun.

Most of the weather in August came about because of a South-South West airstream. This usually produces dull, damp weather in summer off the Atlantic.

September started with settled, sunny, warm weather. The late summer, early autumn heat wave was enjoyed by many villagers, with maximum temperatures in the area reaching 28.8C on the 8th.

This was also the warmest September day I have locally recorded in 30 years.

The heat wave was mostly due to very hot air being carried on a southerly wind from Europe. Although unlike in the last few years, this heat wave didn't last too long. I'll leave it to you to decide if you are sad or glad for that.

The Outlook

CONFIDENCE in the general trend during early October is low. No one is expecting a long autumn heat wave, but it would be nice to see some sunshine instead of the dull, damp weather we've seen so much of.

There is a chance of more settled conditions developing as we head further into October, but we can't rule out spells of changeable weather within this.

Above: A summery village day.

Above: Rain clouds gather over Rowney Green.

Cirrus clouds over Newborne Hill.

Temperatures are, however, more likely to be above average than below, with an increased chance of this happening in October compared to some warm spells. However, expect some cooler nights as well, especially as we head further into autumn.

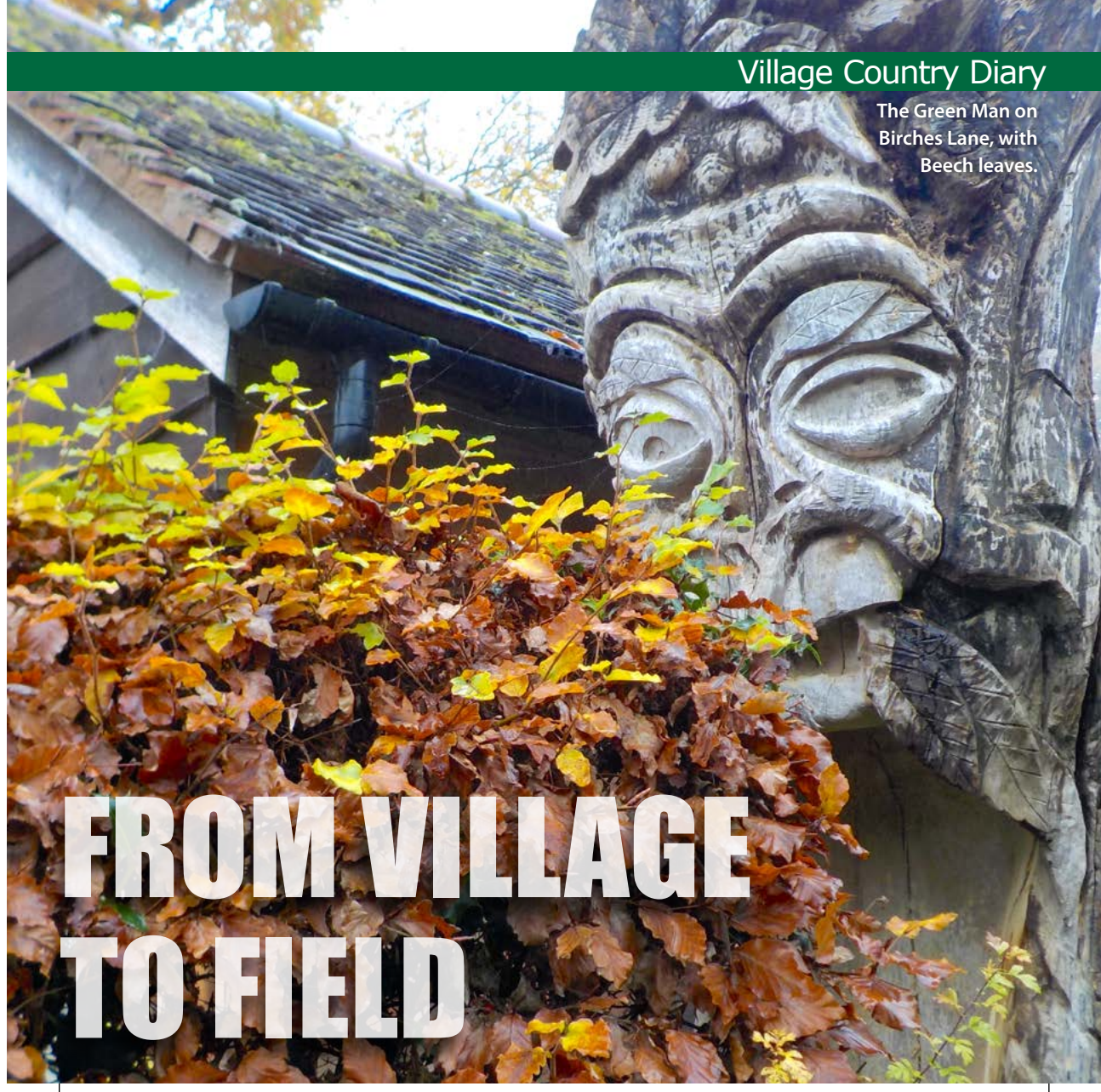
August 2023

Mean Max	20.7C	0.8C below average
Mean Min	11.9C	0.1C below average
Mean	16.3C	0.5C below average
Rainfall	51.7mm	70% of average
Sunshine	161.2hrs	104% of average

September 2023 (to 20th)

Mean Max	22.9C	4.4C below average
Mean Min	13.4C	3.7C above average
Mean	18.2C	4.1C below average
Rainfall	34.3mm	45% of average
Sunshine	101.6hrs	80% of average

More information at ***www.alvechurchweather.metsite.com*** You can see an improved HD weather-cam, updated at one-minute intervals, at: ***www.alvechurchweather.metsite.com/webcam_alvechurch.php***



The Green Man on Birches Lane, with Beech leaves.

FROM VILLAGE TO FIELD

SOMETIMES I get it right in *The Village*! On the day I got my last one I walked up the canal and saw an elephant hawk moth caterpillar on the willow herb, just as I suggested you looked out for. They are just as dramatic-looking as their prettier adult versions.

I worry that the Canal and River Trust may have prematurely cut down all the vegetation here like they did last year by the time you read this. It should be left to die back down and cut in the winter.

I'm writing this in hot sunny September after a coolish wet summer. We are seeing some late butterflies and other insects, so I hope all the nectar from the flowers hasn't gone yet. I guess it will delay the autumn die-down of soft plants and leaf-change of trees.

Mary Green takes us from Withybed Green to Cooper's Hill via Birches Lane and shows us what we can find along the way.

One of my favourite walks to see biodiversity is up Birches Lane, especially the bridleway part of it. Birches Lane leads from Withybed Green to Cooper's Hill. It is a type of old track called a Fordrough or Fore-

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draft. This is a lane that leads from a settlement out to the open land used for grazing animals. There are several lanes and paths round here called that.

Birches Lane is very true to this as it starts off with a tarmacked road with houses and gardens, then becomes a bridleway through a remnant of ancient woodland.

The road section does not show special signs of biodiversity but there are some things to note as you walk up.

One is the presence in the hedges of damson trees. These are the remnants of much more extensive orchard planting in Withybed. They are not native trees of course but are very nearly so, and are good hosts for all manner of wildlife as well as having delicious fruit for us. They flower dependably in spring, providing early nectar for insects. The fruit are beloved by birds. These trees are allowed to grow out to flower and fruit even when the hedges are cut alongside the road.

There are also some flourishing holly trees here (our commonest native evergreen tree) which this year are crammed with berries. All hollies flowered well this year, but of course only female trees produce fruit. They should be very good in October, but they may not last till Christmas once the birds start on them!

Halfway along the road section is a culvert carrying a stream in a large dingle – the local name for a steep wooded valley.

This dingle comes down from the fields up towards Foxhill and can be very full after rain. Its propensity to flood has been mitigated by careful water management as it has a series of holding pools all the way up it.

The dingle further up has wonderful old woodland flora and represents an important piece of our natural history, as do all the dingles round here. They are generally left uncultivated as they are too steep, so are rather like our bits of rain forest showing how the habitat used to be.

Near the dingle is the Green Man,

An Elephant Hawk moth caterpillar: On willow herb by the canal.

the spirit of nature, made by a local carver out of a tree.

When you pass through the little gate on to the bridleway you are immediately in a different environment.

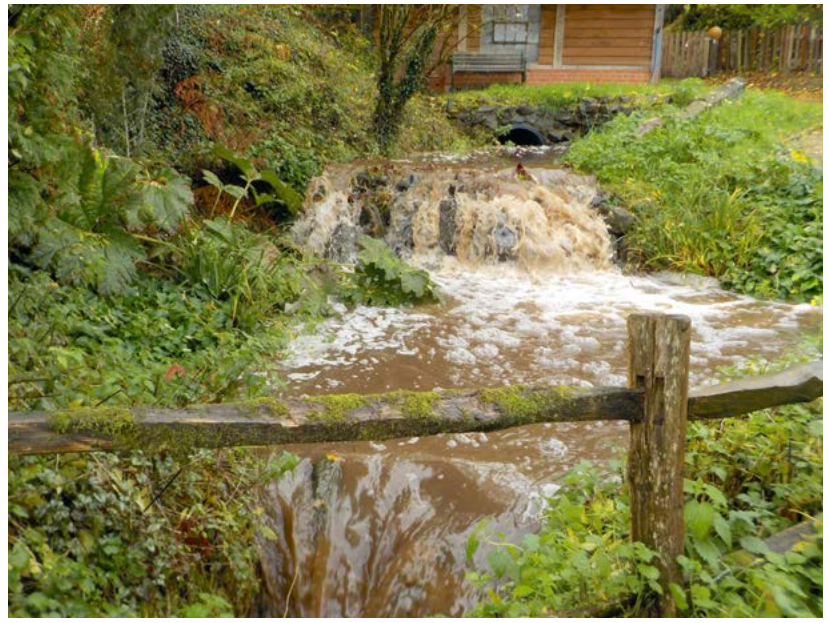
Look on your right and you will see two interesting trees by a small gate leading to a private track.

The tall tree with beautiful bark and a delicate structure is a cherry-plum. The fruit will have been eaten by birds by the time you read this, but at the moment it's round and golden.

Underneath is a small blackthorn bush which looks perfectly normal in October and should still have ripe sloes on it. However, it has a secret. It flowers at Christmas instead of in March or April like other blackthorns.

Fruit trees in this family – types of plum – interbreed with each other. All the way up the bridleway there are blackthorns/ wild plums/ cherry plums giving lovely blossom in spring, and autumn fruit. There are

Will they still be around by Christmas?: Holly berries are a popular snack for birds.



After rainfall: The dingle looks particularly full.

wild cherry trees too, some of them very big.

All around you here are signs of old woodland, clearer in spring but some visible in autumn.

In the banks are harts' tongue ferns, glossy and bright green. There are wild bluebells, dog's mercury and wild garlic, all old woodland plants, as well as primroses and wild hellebore. Further up there is sweet woodruff.

There are some garden plants too as the lane has been used for dumping garden cuttings. Some are harmless, like Epimedium near the bottom and everlasting pea and honesty near the top.

Others are unfortunately invasive, like the variegated yellow archangel which has wiped out the native archangel, another plant of ancient woodland.

On your left is a big old oak tree, hundreds of years old, with several more on the way up as well as some younger ones.

As I mentioned last month, there are plenty of acorns on the oaks this year, but some of them have acorn knapper (or knopper) galls. You'll see these on the way up.

There are a lot of galls feeding on trees, each to its own tree. Oak apples are the best known, and robin's pincushions on roses.

On my last biodiversity walks we found willow leaf galls and ash flower galls. They are all caused by small wasps or saw flies which create a casing to protect their larvae while they feed on the plant.

Birches bridleway has almost every native tree in it - a sign of its age as woodland. It has oak, ash, hazel, field maple, blackthorn, cherry, cherry plum, hawthorn, elder, yew, beech, crab apple, sycamore, wild service, horse chestnut, holly, birch. There are some non-native trees too, especially the pines which are typical of the "big houses" on Cooper's Hill. This variety means it will be a haven for

Wild service: Spot the brown berries.

A variety of galls.
Above: Knaper galls spotted on acorns. **Below:** Willow leaf gall.
Bottom: Robin's pincushion gall.

other wildlife and also a rich habitat for fungi.

Ivy will be in flower among the trees, our last native flower of the year, and the hazel will have next year's catkins already.

You will recognise most of those tree names, but maybe not wild service. It is a tree that used to be common in the midlands but is becoming rarer, surviving in old woods, dingles and uncut hedges. It has lovely clusters of creamy-white flowers in May and brown berries in autumn. You may see some.

The leaves are distinctive and turn a beautiful red-brown later in autumn. The berries ripen very late and are eventually edible, rather like tiny medlars.

They used to be called "chequers" and children used to collect them

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to eat as sweets. Some old pubs called "The Chequers" were named after such trees.

One of the first things I got involved in when I had time to look at wildlife again was a survey of wild service trees, which survive in parts of the midlands where woodland has not been destroyed. I found several in the hedges and dingles of Coopers Hill Farm.

On the right of this fordrough is a parallel farm track, then beyond that a newish wood. I saw it planted just over 30 years ago. It's a lovely mixed wood with many of the trees taken from saplings in local dingles (including wild service).

For a long time it looked a bit like a plantation, rather straight-lined and with not much understory. But now it has become a proper wood with trees at all levels and a good range of ground plants. You can't walk there but you can see it and it adds to the biodiversity of this area.

The border between remnants of old woodland and planted new woodland is disappearing – and the bluebells are spreading!

Whether you see fungi or not depends on moisture and warmth. Both are needed for the fruiting bodies to appear, though of course the fungi are there all the time underground or within the trees.

I often see shaggy caps here – they look just like they sound – and the brownish wood mushrooms. There may be bracket fungi on the trees – I've seen birch polypore here, and jelly-ear on the elder.

I doubt you will see much autumn colour in the trees yet by early October. The ash trees may have turned yellow, being usually earlier, but most of the others will still be green. Later though you will get a lovely sequence of colour here as the autumn moves on.

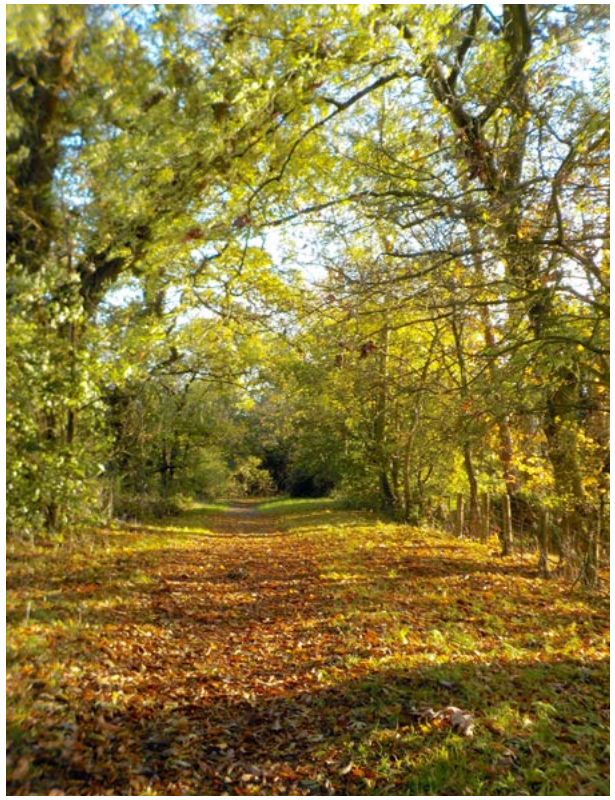
There are birds all round you here, though you might not hear them in October. You may see the resident wren, and hear more than one robin, as well as wood pigeons.

In spring you hear chiffchaffs, chaffinches, green woodpeckers among others. Overhead may be buzzards as they nest nearby.

There are animals too, and I have more than once seen deer in the bridleway. There are badgers in the nearby wood. At any time of year, it's a lovely walk.

If you continue up Cooper's Hill you will notice trees have been cut down by the ancient woodland further up, Sandhills Wood, which I have written about before. They were ash trees showing signs of dieback and had to be removed for safety reasons as they were along the road. The rest of the wood is safe!

■ **I wrote this poem(right) after a local folk music session.**



Autumn: Beautiful colours along the bridleway.

Heart Music

I am in the middle of the music
In a church bell, riding the clapper
In a bluebell, becoming a bumblebee.
Around are intent faces
One by one joining from the quiet.
Hands pluck strings, press notes,
Mouths blow echoes or open to sing.
No one appears to lead. It grows
And swells around me like a soft rock
Carved from time into cathedral shapes.
The music is old as the fields, the trees,
Has passed through a thousand voices
Or hands to reach this single moment
When I hide in it, alone and together
Caught in a spider's web, enthralled.

The anonymous birder

How to enjoy village birdlife

A bit of a twitcher?

WHEN you become interested in birds or wander about with binoculars looking at and listening to birds you may, sooner or later, be referred to as a twitcher.

But are you a twitcher? Probably not, let me explain . . .

As in all things, there are levels of involvement from a passing interest to complete obsession and everything in between. So it is with "birds and birding" as I am going to call it.

Twitchers are birders who are primarily interested in rarities.

In birding circles a "rarity" is a bird which is not in its normal environment. For whatever reason the bird has ended up in the wrong or an unusual place. They might be injured or exhausted, or simply blown off course whilst migrating from breeding to wintering grounds. Spring and autumn are therefore good times to see rarities.

Hopefully, they recover, reorientate and find enough food to continue their journey. This is often not the case as, being out of their normal range, the environment may not provide what the bird needs.

When these rarities are spotted the social media bush telegraph swings into operation and twitchers will "flock" to see the rarity, delightedly adding them to their patch/year/life/etc lists.

Some serious twitchers compete to list the highest numbers of birds in a year, so rarities will give them the edge.

After all, many interests value the rare or the unusual and birding is no different.

Sightings will usually be reported to county recorders or birding organisations who will record the information but will like to have some confirmation that the bird in question has actually been seen.

Twitching in action: In Hopwood, when a great grey shrike, also known as a 'butcher bird', took up residence.

This leads to the derivation of the term twitcher.

In the 1950s ten of the most knowledgeable birders of the time formed a rarities committee, the British Birds Rarities Committee, still going strong today, in order to monitor rare bird sightings.

Two of these, Howard Medhurst and Bob Emmett, would travel at the drop of a hat to verify a reported sighting in the south of England, Howard riding pillion on Bob's Matchless 350 motorbike.

On arrival after a long journey, often cold but full of anticipation, Howard would be shivering as he lit up a comforting Woodbine. His agitated state was called twitching by his companions and so it caught on.

So a twitcher would go on a twitch to see a rare bird. If you are out birding you are not on a twitch, but a birder could be a twitcher temporarily. I have even, on occasion, been known to twitch myself.

Of course, all twitchers are birders, but why "birding" and not "birdwatching"?

Listening to birds as well as identifying them is all part of the same activity. In fact birding is a narrow term as I would strongly recommend taking in all aspects of the environment, as previously highlighted in Mary's Green's column in this magazine.

Unless, that is, you just prefer seeing what comes to the birdfeeder, which is birdwatching, I suppose – and there's nothing wrong with that.

Good, I'm glad I've cleared that up. **JL**

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Welcome to the show

ROWNEY Green Village Hall blossomed with a variety of wonderful flowers once again, as the Rowney Green Horticultural Society hosted its annual Flower and Produce Show.

The popular event is always well attended and looked forward to by local gardening enthusiasts and crafters.

In addition to the traditional Flowers & Vegetable categories, other categories included Arts & Crafts, Photography and Floral Art.

This year saw a notable increase in entries from children. It is encouraging to see young people getting involved in gardening and crafts.

Villager Jo Russell excelled in this year's show, winning six individual trophies and Roy Barnett also had a particularly successful show. Both were presented with awards by National Garden Scheme county organiser Dave Morgan,

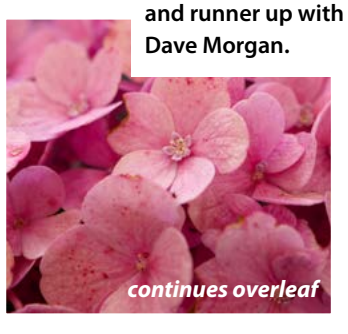
The society's chair, Pat Davies, said: "Our wonderful team all pull together for the organisation and cataloguing of so many varied items; from the oddly shaped vegetable, spectacular flowers, pots of jam, cakes and children's art.

"We are so pleased that everyone had a lovely time during the afternoon and can't wait for next year."

A busy day: Dave Morgan and show super-winner Jo Russell pose in front of some of outstanding displays.

Domestic section: Brenda Rainbow and Mary Tyson judge.

Clockwise from left: Roy Barnett, Rachel Banner and Debbie Satchell pose with their winning entries. Beautiful hydrangeas. Proud bakers. Rosette winner and runner up with Dave Morgan.



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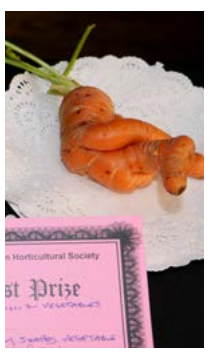
Right: A busy hall of fantastic displays.
Above: Prizes awarded to vegetables.
Below left: Members of the Show team.
Below centre: Winning roses and berries.
Below right: Pat Davies shows her win.

Clockwise from left: Rosie Wynne judges 'Arts & Crafts'.
Jo Russel with her many trophies.
Joint cup winners Janet and Roy Barnett.
Winning wonky veg.
Outstanding florals.
A young rosette holder.

Smiles all round: The cup winners.



Above: Winning and runner-up onions.
Left: Rosettes are awarded.
Below: Elisabeth and Philip Aubury judge the flowers and vegetables.

From above: 'Other' varieties of tomato. Felicity Rixon poses with a pot. Stunning blooms.

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WHAT'S ON GUIDE

On song: The Midland Concert Orchestra in action.

ORCHESTRA OPENS SONGBOOK

THE MIDLAND CONCERT ORCHESTRA (MCO) will be making their debut at Bromsgrove Arts @ Fairfield Village Hall. They will be performing music from the Great American Songbook, on 22 October at 7pm.

Previously known as the West Midland Light Orchestra, and now under the baton of its young and inspirational conductor Joe Davies, the orchestra has gone from strength to strength attracting many new young aspiring musicians to join them. The orchestra now felt it was the right time to change its name to fully reflect the music that they love and play.

Joe said: "We are the only orchestra of its kind that I know of and very proud to have the name Midland now in our title."

Joining musical director Joe Davies on stage will be guest vocalists Claire Worboys and Jonathan Darby, and the compère for the evening is Peter Tomlinson, who is president of the MCO and well-known to many as the originator of *Tiswas*, a children's television series aired on Saturday mornings, and with a long career in television and radio.

The concert will feature songs by Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart, Glenn Miller and others from the Great American Songbook. With more than 40 musicians and several guest singers who regularly perform with the MCO family, everyone will bring their unique musical talents to each performance.

Doors open at 7pm, and tickets are available from Bromsgrove Arts - the home of Fairfield Flicks & Music, at: https://bromsgrovearts.org.uk/event/midland-concert-orchestra. You can also buy tickets from their website: bromsgrovearts.org.uk - priced at £10 for adults and free for under 18s. Tickets will also be available on the door.

EVENTS

WINDMILL HILL CARE are hosting a Macmillan Coffee event at St Andrews Community Centre, Barnt Green on Saturday 30th September 2 - 4pm. All are welcome to join.

CHURCHES TOGETHER in Alvechurch and Rowney Green, will be holding a PEACE SERVICE on Saturday 21 October at 5pm at St Laurence Church, followed by a typical Ukranian meal at 6pm. Please contact rogerwardle1944@gmail.com to confirm your attendance.

BROMSGROVE AND REDDITCH WELCOME REFUGEES (BRWR) has organised a fundraising fashion show. Volunteers will model a range of women's outfits from well-known high street stores, before they're offered for sale at discounts of up to 75%. All ticket sales will benefit BRWR, which provides a range of help for refugees from Ukraine, Afghanistan and Syria.
The fashion show will be held on Saturday October 14th at Bromsgrove Methodist Centre. Doors open at 1.30pm and the show starts at 2pm. Tickets are £8 in advance via info@brwr.uk or £9 on the door. Donations to help fund the group's work can be made at https://brwr.uk

MUSIC

ALVECHURCH COMMUNITY CHOIR usually meets in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mondays at 7.30pm with occasional pub and outdoor sessions and a live stream. The choir is inclusive and open to everyone, whether you think you can sing or not. For more information or to join or book them, see their website www.alvechurchcommunitychoir.org.uk. They are in the Village Hall on 2, 16 and 23 October, with an open session at the Crown Inn on 9 October.

BEOLEY VILLAGE HALL hosts live music, comedy, cinema and jazz nights. On Wednesday Jazz nights the bar opens at 7.45pm, with entertainment from 8.15pm.
For Friday night events, the bar opens at 7pm with entertainment from 7.30pm, and on Saturdays the bar opens at 7.15pm with entertainment from 8pm.
For more information and details, contact Paul on 07973 759340 or Richard 01527 66646. The programme is subject to change if the circumstances dictate.

THE ASKLEPIOS ORCHESTRA will host their Autumn Concert in St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, B45 8NR on 10 December 2023.

BEL CANTO SINGERS, the well-known 4-part Worcestershire choir, are back to rehearsals at St. John's Church, Greenlands Avenue Redditch B98 7PZ on Monday evenings. They are always happy to welcome new singers. They have a very wide and varied repertoire and a huge catalogue to include pop, fun pieces, musical theatre, jazz, folk music and traditional choral and classical music along with much more. Bel Canto Singers are a friendly and social group, under the guidance of Musical Director, Liz Green and accompanist, Wendy Quirk.
They are a non-profit making organisation and select a new charity each year to support both financially and with provision of their services. Just turn up at rehearsal on Mondays at 7.30pm where there will be a wide range of singing activities, light refreshments and chat. More information please contact Secretary Veronica Porter 07885 507899 or visit www.belcantosingers.org.uk

THE GEMINI Choir is seeking new singers. Info from Philip Morris on 07969 741137.

BLACKWELL Concert Band and Training Band is open to all brass and woodwind players of all abilities. To learn more about the band, book them, or find details of upcoming events, email blackwellconcertband98@gmail.com or visit www.blackwellconcertband.co.uk

SINGING For Health is a group aimed specifically at people with health problems, mental or physical. Face to face groups have now resumed, meeting on Wednesdays 2-3pm at Longbridge Retirement Village and Thursdays 2-3pm at St Chad's Church, Rubery (£3 per session). Everyone is welcome!

BROMSGROVE Music Centre runs weekly sessions for young brass, wind, and string instrument players to enjoy being part of a group who rehearse and perform together. New members always welcome! Sessions are run by Severn Arts at St John's Middle School, Bromsgrove, on Mondays 5.45–6.45pm Individual instrumental and vocal lessons are also provided at the centre. For more info, see www.severnarts.org.uk/music-centre-groups

BROMSGROVE Folk Club meets on the second and last Thurs every month at Catshill Club, starting at 8pm. For a full list of events call Bob Bignell on 0121 476 5938 or see www.bromsgrovefolkclub.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Rock Choir offers everyone the chance to sing pop, rock and chart songs – no audition needed. Free taster sessions available. More info at www.rockchoir.com or on 01252 714276.

BROMSGROVE Community Choir meets on Thurs evenings, 6–7 pm at Bromsgrove Methodist Church (main church hall). They sing for fun and enjoyment; everyone welcome, singers or not. Contact Ruth Henley for details on 01527 527022 or 07812 145267, or email r.g.henley@btinternet.com

DANCING

TANGO ARGENTINO at Barnt Green Quakers/Friends Meeting House on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings. For further information: www.facebook.com/groups/tango42/announcements (no Facebook account needed).

AELFGYTHE Border Morris is seeking new dancers (female) and musicians (male or female) to join them for fun, exercise and dancing. They meet at 7.45pm every Weds in Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall. Everyone welcome. Come and play traditional folk music, or try Morris dancing. For more details call Pam on 07961 830 831.

FRENCH & Breton folk dancing meets at Alvechurch Village Hall on the first Sat each month from 2.30–5pm (Covid-dependent, so please check first by emailing alvechurch-frenchdance@gmail.com). Informal tuition and live music provided. New dancers (and musicians) welcome. £2 per session.

SEQUENCE Ballroom and Latin dancing every Mon evening at 8pm at the Longbridge Social Club, 1012 Bristol Road South, Northfield. Occasional free tuition. All welcome to a friendly fun-filled dance. Details from Kalvin on 07725 265024.

ALVECHURCH Morris Men are on the lookout for new dancers and musicians. They practise on Mondays at Alvechurch Baptist Church Hall, 8.30–10pm, followed by a "debrief" at a local hostelry. They dance in local towns and at various local and national events, and perform a world-famous (sort of) mummers play in the village every New Year's Day. No ability, fitness or co-ordination required – if you are male, 18+ and prepared to spend more time than is probably good for you in public houses, pop along to meet the group! Drop in to any practice, contact Steve on 07375 592928 or email: alvechurchbagman@gmail.com

NANCY Butterfly Morris Dancers dance in the North-West Morris style (clogs!) and practise at Catshill Methodist Church Hall on Monday evenings ready to meet up with other Morris sides for social events and festivals. They are very happy to welcome new adult dancers and musicians. See: www.nancybutterfly.co.uk or Facebook for what they get up to. You can contact them via the website or Jane on 07726 915289.

AVONCROFT Folk Dance Group enjoys anything from barn dances to ones seen in *Pride & Prejudice* or *Poldark*. All welcome, no need to have a partner. The group meets every Thurs from 8–10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. £2.50 incl refreshments. Info from Liz Stanton on 01905 353995 or liz@the-stantons.uk or visit www.avoncroftfdg.weebly.com

BJ's BUSY Boots Line Dancing Classes: Tues 2–3pm Bromsgrove Leisure Centre; 7–10pm Stoke Prior Sports/Country Club. Thurs 1.15–3.30pm Bromsgrove Methodist Church Centre. Social Dance usually 1st Sat in month at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane. It's a fun way to exercise. For more details phone Brenda on 01527 870151.

AMY GREAVES SCHOOL OF DANCE & Fitness offers a variety of classes for toddler up to adults. Based in Hopwood, Bournville and Longbridge. Contact 07979408997 amygreaves1@hotmail.co.uk www.amygreavesschoolofdance.com

SEQUENCE dancing every Tuesday evening at 8pm at Fairfield Village Hall, Bromsgrove.

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Welcoming and friendly atmosphere, all levels welcome. For further details please contact Joyce & Len on 0121 682 3266.

DANCE AND FITNESS at Bournheath Village Hall including Adult Zumba, Pilates and Stretch classes as well as KS1 and Baby Ballet. For more information message 'Dance With Nikki' on social media or n.foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

LINEDANCE CLASS, every Thursday between 6pm - 7pm at Extracare Longbridge Village. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

BEGINNERS LINEDANCE class, Tuesdays 6pm - 7pm at West Heath Community Centre, Hamstead House, B31 3QY. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

NEW SALSA dance classes, every Thursday at the Alvechruch Inn, B48 7LD. Beginners classes at 7pm, with the main class at 8pm. All classes are £9 each or both classes for £15. Come on your own or with friends. Contact 07779686679.

BALLROOM/LATIN SEQUENCE dance some line dance held on the first Friday of the month (check just in case Friday has to change because of commitments in the village) from 8pm -10.30pm at Extracare Longbridge Village, B31 2FZ. Contact Bryan 07975569065 for details.

CLUBS, GROUPS & SOCIETIES

ST GODWALD'S Community Cafe meets every other Fri from 10am–noon at St Godwald's Room adjacent to the Church Hall, Finstall Road, Bromsgrove. Friendship, cake, tea/coffee. Donations welcome— monies to St Basil's charity for homeless youngsters. More info: davidrowe876@btinternet.com

Community Meeting Room Hire Available

ENQUIRE TODAY FOR MORE INFORMATION

BARNT GREEN QUAKER MEETING HOUSE
6 SANDHILLS ROAD
BARNT GREEN
B45 8NR

BARNTGREENMH@THEPRIORYROOMS.CO.UK

0121-236-2317

BROMSGROVE Men In Sheds is a group for anyone (male or female) who has retired or been made redundant and wants to spend time with like-minded people. The group meets Mon–Thurs, 10am–2pm at Unit 1, Metals & Ores Industrial Estate, Stoke Prior B60 4JZ. You can find more information by calling 01527 570490 or email enquiries@ageukbrwf.org.uk

BARNT GREEN QUAKERS invite you to their autumn film screenings. Admission is free however donations are welcome. Full details can be found at The Meeting House, 6 Sandhills Rd, Barnt Green. On 20 October at 7pm the film will be a Romance and Tragedy: Romeo and Juliet, one of the most beautiful film versions, with memorable score.
On 17 November at 7pm it will be a comedy starring Helen Mirren, where beautiful people make beautiful food in the south of France. Cultural barriers are broken.
On 15 December at 7pm the film will be the last Ealing Comedy: Five oddball criminals planning a bank robbery rent rooms on a cul-de-sac from an octogenarian widow under the pretext that they are classical musicians.
On 11th & 12th November between 2.30-4.30pm there will be a Quaker Service Memorial Exhibition over Rememberance Weekend.

PLACES OF WELCOME is a growing network of local community groups who provide their neighbourhoods with places where all people can feel safe and where they can connect, belong and contribute. The network is open in St Laurence Church and The Ark on Wednesdays 10.30am-12pm, all are open to everyone and offer friendship and hospitality, free refreshments and local knowledge about the neighbourhood. Visit www.placesofwelcome.org.uk or email info@placesofwelcome.org.uk

REDDITCH Military History Society usually meets monthly in St Luke's Church Hall (Evesham Road, Redditch, B97 4JX), 7 for 7.30pm. More info from Ron on 01527 545450 or ronnieg33b@hotmail.co.uk

FRIENDS Of Bittell Reservoirs is a group of local people interested in preserving the natural environment of the Site of Special Scientific Interest at Upper Bittell, Lower Bittell and Mill Shrub reservoirs, which are important staging posts for migrant birds and wildlife. If you have an interest in preserving this unique environment and would like to help in its preservation and maintenance, contact: Charles Deverill on cdjd26@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY runs a regular programme of social events and guided walks, as well as maintaining local footpaths. Talks and social events are held in the Village Hall, unless otherwise noted. Entry at talks and AGM is free for members and £1 for guests, including a drink and biscuits. Litter picks start at 10am. from the village square. Other social events are by ticket and details of venue, start time and price will be published by the organisers nearer the time.

The next litter picking family session is on Sunday 8 October.
On Wednesday 18 October they will host: Fire safety: a talk by Chris Atkins from the Hereford and Worcester Fire & Rescue service.
On Wednesday 15 November, the talk will be "The evolving life of a freelance musician" with live music by Shulah Oliver, Artistic Director of The Midland Sinfonia, and colleagues. AVS is always pleased to welcome new members—contact Martin on 07742 100007 or martinclarke1@btinternet.com.

REDDITCH Community Shed is a project that encourages skills, combats loneliness, and provides a sense of worth in people who are retired or otherwise wondering what to do with themselves. They have a small woodworking work shop in the Kingfisher Centre just outside Primark and they are open Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Call in for tea and biscuits and a look round. More details at www.RedditchCommunityShed.co.uk or on FaceBook. If you're in Redditch of a Tuesday or Thursday they would be very pleased to see you.

THE MONDAY Fellowship group meets at the Parish Centre behind St Andrew's Church in Barnt Green at 2.30pm on the second Monday every month; £2 to include tea and biscuits and an interesting talk. Info: Maureen Frowley on 0121 445 0880.

INNER WHEEL Club of Redditch welcomes you to its monthly meetings on 2nd Tuesday of the month at the Southcrest Hotel Redditch. An international Women's Organisation, they enjoy a bit of everything; walks, talks, days & evenings out, and everything in between whilst at the same time helping the community. Contact Anne Robertson for information 07580351361. Or email redditch.innerwheel@gmail.com or visit www.innerwheel.co.uk

BROMSGROVE U3A: No longer in full time work? Activity/interest groups and speaker meetings are happening throughout the month. Check website for details: www.u3asites.org.uk/bromsgrove/home

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Welcomes Refugees is a group of volunteers supporting local refugees who arrived under the government's Syrian Vulnerable Persons' Relocation Scheme (SVPRS). New volunteers always needed – training and support given. BRWR is open to all, irrespective of political or religious belief. Full details at www.brwr.uk

CATSHILL Carers and Bereavement Back Up Group is a group set up specifically to offer respite, socialising and occasional speakers to carers and bereaved in the area. It meets on the last Tues each month in the coffee bar area of Catshill Methodist Church Centre in Golden Cross Lane from 2.30pm for about 1.5hrs. All carers and bereaved welcome, as well as those who used to care for someone who has passed away or is now in a care facility. Tea and biscuits/cake provided – no charge. Contact Sheila (0121 445 2813) or Di (0121 445 3595) for details and encouragement.

CARERS LUNCH

ALVECHURCH BAPTIST CHURCH will be hosting another lunch for carers and those for whom they care on Wednesday 11th October at 12pm.

They would like to give a special invitation to those carers who for many reasons are now not caring and are on their own.

If you would like to come on the 11th please ring either 07917108934 or 0121 447 7369 where a message can be left otherwise email dlshoesmith@yahoo.co.uk

BROMSGROVE Speakers Club meets at The Barn at The Bell at Belbroughton every other Tues, 7.45–10pm. Everyone who wants to gain confidence in public speaking is welcome, but you must book in advance via www.bromsgrovespeakers.org.uk, which also contains full details of events.

RE-ENGAGE (formerly Contact the Elderly) aims to help isolated elderly people by offering monthly tea parties where they can reconnect or make new friends in their own community. If you know of an elderly person who could benefit, please get in touch on 07539 276054. Guests need to be aged over 75 and living alone, and must be mobile enough to walk to a driver's car with assistance. Find info at www.contact-the-elderly.org.uk or on Facebook @ContacttheElderlyRedditch

AGE UK Herefordshire and Worcestershire have a free Dementia Café at Finstall Village hall. It is a free social hub aimed at people with dementia, their families, and carers in Bromsgrove and the surrounding areas. It takes place every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 10.30am-12.30pm.

BROMSGROVE Photographic Society is a friendly, active and mutually supportive club for those keen to learn about, or improve, their photographic and digital imaging skills. The growing membership has skills ranging from novice to highly skilled, within wide-ranging subjects. The club meets on Tues nights, 8-10pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. For more info, visit www.bromsgroveps.com or see Facebook and Twitter.

ROTARY Club of Bromsgrove meets every 2nd Tues of the month at Maekong Thai Restaurant, and every 4th Tues at Bromsgrove School, both 7pm for 7.30pm. New members welcome. For more info visit www.bromsgroverotary.org.uk or contact Ron Pearce on 07703 567982.

HEART Of England Speakers is a friendly public speaking club, based in Solihull. It is affiliated to Toastmasters International, and meets on the 1st and 3rd Tues of each month, 7.30—9.30pm, at the Silhillians Sports Club and Events Centre. If you would like to boost your confidence get in touch via www.heart-speakers.org.uk, Instagram @toastmasters-heartofengland, or via LinkedIn.

REDDITCH Rotary Club meets Monday lunchtimes at the Abbey Hotel, Hither Green Lane, Redditch, B98 9BE. You would be very welcome to join in. Want to be involved, hear interesting speakers, and serve your community? Want to know more? Contact Peter Williams on 01527 60277.

LICKEY PHAB Club is a social club where people aged 14 and over, with and without disabilities, can come together each week to have fun! It is affiliated to national charity Phab. The club meets every Mon from 7.30–9.30pm at The Trinity Centre, Lickey Parish Hall to have fun, play games, do crafts or just chat – there's also a tuck shop! More info from Louise Boother on 07814 122990 or lickeyphabclub@hotmail.com

BEACON Ladies Club meets at 8pm on alternate Weds evenings at The Hawthorns Social Club, Rednal Hill Lane, Rednal. There is a varied programme of speakers and outings, including occasional visits to the theatre. New members of all ages welcome. £12 annual membership, plus £2 fortnightly. Call Barbara on 0121 445 3456 or Anita on 445 3770.

BARNT GREEN FRIENDSHIP CLUB meets every 3rd Tues of the month at 2.15pm at the Friends Meeting House, Barnt Green. Visitors £3 to include tea and biscuits. Members 50p. Ladies and gents both welcome. For more details call Rosalind on 0121 445 0598.

THE WORCESTER-BIRMINGHAM & DROITWICH CANALS SOCIETY holds regular monthly meetings in the meeting room behind The Weighbridge Pub, Scarfield Hill, Alvechurch on the first Tuesday of the month. There is usually a guest speaker. They promote the upkeep of the canals to ensure that the heritage is looked after for all to enjoy and are a registered charity. Find out more: www.wbdcs.org.uk or look on Facebook @wbdcs.org.uk. Please email contact@wbdcs.org.uk for further information. Meetings start at 7.45pm. Non-members are always welcome. Free entry.

ALVECHURCH WEDNESDAY CLUB usually meets on the second Weds each month, and offers the chance to make new friends, meet old ones and enjoy talks, demos and visits. Their October meeting will be on the 11th at Alvechurch Cricket Club at 1.30pm.
They are having a talk entitled *A Black Country Poet* by David Bartley. It should be a very interesting and entertaining talk, so come along and join them to find out for

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yourself. Bring a friend or make some new ones within the friendly group!

COFFEE, Cake and Chat is a place to meet new friends or catch up with old friends (includes a dedicated baby area) on the 4th Friday of each month 10:30am - 12pm at The Wheel, Blackwell. No charge, donations welcome. More info on 0121 445 1425.

LICKEY Hills Local History Society meets monthly at 7.30pm in the Trinity Centre, Old Birmingham Road, Lickey B45 8ES. Annual subscription £15. Non-members £3 per meeting. For more information please email: info@lhlhs.org.uk or visit: www.lhlhs.org.uk

BROMSGROVE (1982) PROBUS Club provides opportunities for retired and semi retired men to meet socially. A members meeting is held at Avoncroft Arts Centre on the 3rd Wednesday monthly 10am until 12pm, including refreshments and a talk by a guest speaker. Other regular activities include monthly walks, lunches including partners, snooker--, social outings and IT. For more info visit www.bromsgrove1982probus.weebly.com or contact Martin on 07717 150136.

BROMSGROVE & Redditch Soroptimists meets every 2nd Thurs of the month at Burcot Village Hall. New members welcome – pop to a meeting, email sibrsoroptimist@gmail.com or ring 07812 985927.

ALVECHURCH Historical Society has a planned programme of talks on the first Monday of the month at 7.45pm at The Ark, St Laurence Church, Alvechurch. More details from Anne Humphries on 0121 445 5955. New members welcome.

KINGFISHER PROBUS Club of Redditch is recruiting retired and semi-retired men to join them in a friendly environment. They meet every 2nd Thurs of the month at 11.30am at the Court Leet,174 Worcester Road,

Bromsgrove B61 7AY, with a short meeting at noon then lunch followed by an interesting talk given by a visiting speaker. Partners/friends welcome to join for walks, trips, golf, skittles and special lunches. Contact Chris Bailey on 01527 835802 for confirmation of date and venue. More info at www.kingfisherprobusredditch.co.uk

BROMSGROVE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY meets on the 3rd Monday of each month at Bromsgrove Rugby Club. Doors open 7.30pm, speakers begin 7.45pm. Admission free on your first visit; refreshments available. Observing meetings are also held on the first Monday each month – bring your telescopes. More info via www.broms-astro.org.uk, www.facebook.com/bromsastro or emailing info@broms-astro.org.uk

ROTARY CLUB of Lickey Hills meets on Monday evenings, 7.15 for 7.30pm, at Hillscourt Conference Centre (NASUWT headquarters) on Rose Hill (B45 8RS). For details contact Graham Wiseman on 0121 460 1402.

SILVER THREADS, the Alvechurch club, meets on the first Weds each month at 2pm in Alvechurch Village Hall. You'll be sure of a welcome in this friendly atmosphere, where members can chat over a cup of tea. There are regular bingo sessions, and occasional days out. New members welcome. More info from Pat on 0121 447 8630.

WOODRUSH RUGBY Club "Old Dogs" meet at 8pm on the 2nd Thurs in the month at the Clubhouse, Icknield Street, 01564 822878. Open to all former players, social members and old friends for a social chat and the odd reminisce over a glass of beer. Join us: call Mike Betts on 07960 303254 or visit www.woodrushrfc.co.uk or info@woodrushrfc.co.uk

The North Worcestershire Association of the NATIONAL TRUST hold monthly meetings with interesting speakers on 3rd Thursday 7.30pm at Tardebigge Community Hall, also walks, outings and an annual holiday. For further info email Ros257@yahoo.co.uk

Bromsgrove & District AMATEUR RADIO CLUB meets every Friday evening from 7.30pm at Avoncroft Arts Centre. The club is open to anyone with an interest in Amateur Radio. More details from the secretary Alan on 07886 000052 or secretary@bromsgroveradioclub.co.uk

COMMUNITY COFFEE morning - open to all. Free refreshments and chat. Wednesdays 10-12 at Barnt Green Baptist Church. Enquiries can be made to: events@bgb.org.uk

THE MACULAR Society Barnt Green Support Group meets on the last Fri of the month (with some exceptions) at The Parish Centre, behind St Andrew's Church, Sandhills Road, Barnt Green, B45 8NR, 2–4pm. Friendly, self-help group, proving there is more to life than this devastating eye condition. New members always welcome. For more info, ring Wendy on 0121 445 1585 or Alan on 01527 877864.

SPORT, FITNESS & HEALTH

UPTON WARREN SAILING CLUB sails throughout the year at Aztec (Upton Warren) opposite Webb's Garden Centre, Wychbold. A small, friendly club with both mixed fleet racing and cruising sessions. Most members sail their own boats but there are also club boats available for members to use. See www.uwsc.co.uk to find out more or contact membership@uwsc.co.uk

JOOLISM HIIT CLASSES. Semi-PT resistance training for ladies only in a well-equipped gym in Bromsgrove. For ladies who want toned and strong bodies. Attendance must be pre-booked via julie@joolismfitness.co.uk

WOODRUSH RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB, Icknield Street, Alvechurch, B38 0EL is recruiting: Senior (Men & Ladies) U17 Colts Mini/Junior & Micros. Call 07341 256821 for recruitment or 01564 822878 (Clubhouse) email info@woodushrfc.co.uk or see: www.drushrfc.co.uk Facebook @WoodrushRFC

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE SOCIETY'S WALKS are held at 2pm of the first Sunday of the month unless noted otherwise. For walks starting outside the village, please contact the walk leader if you need a lift. Occasionally, weather conditions mean that a walk must be cancelled at late notice: check with the leaders or the AVS website if unsure. Always wear appropriate footwear. Contact walks organiser Tony Brannon for more information about the walks: avswalks@gmail.com
The next walk will be held on Sunday 1 October, join for "A lovely countryside walk" led by Mike and Jean Collins. Meet at the Peacock Inn B38 0EH, contact 07773 019878 for more information. The following walk will be on Sunday 5 November, led by Tony Brannon "Arrow Valley Country Park". Meet at Washford Lane car park, B98 0HY. Contact 07763468893 for further details.

BARNT GREEN FISHING CLUB controls the fishing (both game and coarse) on the Bittell Reservoirs. Interested parties - contact: bgfcmembership@outlook.com or Facebook @ Barnt Green Fishing Club.

REDDITCH & Bromsgrove Company of Archers meet April–Sept, Mon 6.30pm and Fri 6.30pm at Meadow Park Football Ground (by Harris Brush Works – outdoors) and Oct–March on Fri 6.30pm at Studley Leisure Centre (indoors). Really friendly no-pressure club. New members always welcome (juniors from 8 years old, seniors from 18 to 80+, seasoned archers or absolute beginners).
Beginners' courses run throughout the year or taster sessions by appointment. Further info from rbcoaCoach@gmail.com, rbcoasecretary@gmail.com, or www.redditcharchers.org

REDDITCH Ramblers is a growing, friendly and sociable group offering a full walks programme including walks every Sat and Sun and a midweek walk most weeks. Sun walk is usually 6–9 miles; the Sat walk is more challenging, usually 10–12 miles. Midweek walks vary, sometimes morning walks followed by option of lunch or full day walking. The Saturday Strollers walk fortnightly (4–5 miles). Newcomers are always welcome and can walk three times with the group before deciding if they want to join. The group also arranges holidays, coach trips and social events throughout the year. Full info at redditch.ramblers@gmail.com or www.redditchramblers.org.uk

PHYSIOTHERAPY-LED Pilates Classes in Cofton Hackett, Barnt Green and Lickey Hills. Mixed ability Daytime and Evening classes available. Mother & Baby classes also run by Women's Health Physiotherapists. Small and welcoming classes aimed to improve balance, muscle tone and posture as well as overall body strength. Contact Elizabeth on 07850 604425 or elizabethalexanderltd@gmail.com or see www.elizabethalexanderphysiotherapy.com

CLUBBERCISE@ Alvechurch: Get sweat and glow! Get ready for exercise in disguise. You'll be dancing yourself happy and sweating until you sparkle, without even realising it. Mondays 7.30–8.30pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

POUND FITNESS@ Alvechurch: Channel your inner rockstar with this full body cardio-jam session. Using Ripstix®, lightly-weighted drumsticks engineered specifically for exercising, POUND transforms drumming into an incredibly effective way of working out. Weds 7.30–8.15pm at Alvechurch School. All places MUST be pre-booked via www.leeshfitness.co.uk or 07541 625939.

MEDITATION CLASSES for Everyone. Come and try a KIND approach to Meditation and experience for yourself the revitalising power of a relaxed, calm, clear mind, whether beginner or experienced practitioner. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, online or a mixture. REDUCE STRESS, FEEL CALMER, SLEEP BETTER. To join us for a trail contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F Sally My Yoga Mind

BARNT GREEN Sailing Club offers regular sailing, either racing or casual sailing, in beautiful surroundings at Upper Bittell reservoir. For info contact secretary@bgsc.uk or see www.sailingbarntgreen.com

BRIAR Rose Field Archers is a field archery club based near Bromsgrove. There are two qualified coaches for those interested in taking up the sport. For information contact briarrosefieldarchers@gmail.com

YOGA Really Works: classes on Thurs evenings (term-time only), 7–8pm at Cotteridge Quaker Meeting House, Watford Road. Six-week blocks £45. Slow and mindful rhythmic movement in time with the breath. Accessible venue— classes open to wheelchair uses and less abled persons. Contact George on 07490 781637 or yogareallyworks@outlook.com, see www.yogareallyworks.co.uk or on Facebook @Yogareallyworks

THE RAMBLERS Bromsgrove Group: Guided walking with our group for pleasure, fitness and fun. Full programme of walks / events throughout the year. More info at www.bromsgroveramblers.webs.com or call Martin on 01527 857117 or Peter on 01527 558203.

ALVECHURCH WALKING Buddies: join a regular local walk with like-minded people who simply want to go on a local, sedate and friendly walk with no pressure. Well-behaved owners and their dogs are very welcome. The group meets at 10.30am every Thurs. For more info, search for 'alvwb' on Facebook or contact Tony on 07763 468893.

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL run a series of weekly health walks around Bromsgrove and its districts. The walks are usually steady in pace and led by qualified walk leaders, and free to attend. Where it exists, walks are often followed by guided sessions on the park gym equipment. Blackwell Gentle Walk, Wednesdays, 10.30am, start opposite the entrance to St. Catherine's Church. Lickey End Walking for Health, Tuesdays, 10am, meet at Lickey End Recreation Ground car park. Oakalls and Harwood Park Health Walk, Wednesdays, 2pm, meet at The Oakalls Play Area. Sanders Park Walk, Mondays, 9.50am for 10am start, meet at the café kiosk near the car park. There are three options: Short (30mins), Medium (2-3miles in 60-75mins), and Fast (3+ miles in 60mins). Bromsgrove Rural Walk, Fridays, 9.45am for 10am departure, meet in the Sanders Park car park extension. These rural walks vary between 4 and 7 miles and can involve driving, a system of car sharing has been established. Stoke Heath Health Walks, Thursdays, 10.30am, meet at Stoke Heath Recreation Ground. Wythall Health Walk, Wednesday, 2pm, meet at Wythall car park B47 6LZ.

SOCIAL TENNIS takes place at Rubery Community & Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, Rubery B45 9AD on Mondays from 1–3pm. The group would welcome a few more players – just turn up or ring Don on 01527 759 318.

SARACEN Cycling Club is seeking new members. Men, ladies, beginners, and regular riders are all welcome. The long-established club meets regularly by the Tardebigge Pub on Thurs at 10am and Sun at 9.45am. See www.saracenroadclub.com or call Ivor on 0121 453 2287.

LONGBRIDGE Cycling Club meets weekly on Tues and either Sat or Sun. Ride pace generally at 9-11mph overall average, varied distances. Hotel and hostel weekends away, cycle camping adventures, social outings and much more. All ages, beginners, and seasoned

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cyclists all welcome. Call or text Deb on 07738 982161, email debweston@aol.com or see www.longbridgecyclingclub.com or Facebook @longbridgecyclingclub

MERCIAN NORDIC WALKING: come and try a taster session for fun, fitness and friendship. More info at www.merciannordicwalking.co.uk Online fitness and personal training available at www.mercianfitness.co.uk

PILATES with Steff Affleck (Rowney Green) Mat classes, apparatus 1:1 and duets. Irrespective of age, gender, health or fitness we could all benefit from understanding more about how to keep moving well. Joseph Pilates' system of exercise, using apparatus he invented, enables you to challenge what is strong, build what is weaker, exploring how you can balance the body to move away from pain and discomfort towards greater resilience and independence. Graduate of Pilates Professional Advanced Teacher Training; teaching Pilates for 17 years. Call 07759590830 or see www.steffaffleck.co.uk Mat classes and 1:1 (apparatus).

BARNT Green Sports Club (Margesson Drive, Barnt Green, B45 8LR) offers racquet sports in a friendly environment, plus running and cycling groups. Clubhouse with licensed bar. More info from Nick Butcher on 0121 445 1978 or visit www.barntgreensportsclub.co.uk

CATSHILL FC offers youth coaching sessions each Saturday morning at Catshill Middle School, Meadow Road, Catshill, B61 0JW. Boys and girls from Reception age upwards are welcome. Contact Gary on 07462 118920 or see www.catshillfc.co.uk for further info.

BROMSGROVE & REDDITCH Badminton Club welcomes players for social and league play. Playing Sunday evenings 5.40 to 7.40pm. Details from Steve Whittaker 07805 051456.

PILATES with Lottie Newberry: Physiotherapy-led Pilates classes every Monday in Alvechurch in the day and Barnt Green in the evening. Contact Lottie on lottienewberrypilates@hotmail.com. All abilities welcome.

ACTIVE SENIORS Exercise Classes at Alvechurch Village Hall, run by Bromsgrove council on Fridays starting 9.15am, £5 per class. Contact g.peart@hotmail.co.uk orc on 07828 515344 for more information.

YOGA for Every-Body. Come and try a fresh approach to Yoga, that works with your body rather than against it. A slow-paced, yet powerful Yoga for EveryBody, whether beginner or experienced, flexible or wishing you were. Classes with community and an experienced teacher, at The Ark, Alvechurch, Blackwell First School, online or a mixture. MOVE BETTER, BE CALMER, FEEL GREAT! To trial a class, contact Sally: www.MyYogaMind.co.uk, classes@MyYogaMind.co.uk, 07903 663085, F: Sally My Yoga Mind

TAI CHI (Qigong) sessions in Alvechurch Village Hall on Mon 10–11am and Friday 10.30. Qigong is an integration of physical postures, breathing techniques, and focused intentions. More details Nige on 07966069956 or nige@mindfulmoves.co.uk

FIVE WAYS Old Edwardians' Cricket Club at Ash Lane, Hopwood: Junior, Men's and Women's teams, come and join in! Open to all. Excellent facilities. Everyone welcome. Coaching for juniors on Fri evenings May to Aug. Contact Mark Tovey on 01527 835031.

NEW Ravens (North East Worcestershire Ravens Rugby League Club) is now based at Forshaw Heath Lane, Portway, B94 5LH. Junior training and 'little leaguers' take place on Sun mornings from 10.30am, with open-age and touch on Weds evenings from 7pm. All welcome at this family-orientated club. Contact Gail on 07515 020844 or Jason on 07957 248464 visit www.newravens.net

KINGS Norton Rhinos offers contact and non-contact rugby for children from Reception to Year 12. A safe and friendly introduction to rugby – and plenty of outdoor fun and exercise! Training takes place at KNRFC Ash Lane, Hopwood, on Sundays from 9.30–11.30am. Contact Simon Thompson on 07968 424585 or visit www.knrfc.co.uk

HOPWOOD Ladies Cycling Club meets at Hopwood Playing Field on Tuesdays at 11.30am and Wednesdays at 9.30am. For information, visit www.hopwoodladiescycling-club.co.uk or phone Sheila Evans on 07779 530017.

MARTIAL ARTS Kickboxing/Karate at The Ark Tuesdays 6.30-7.30. For more information please visit www.forcecombatmartialarts.co.uk

SLIMMING WORLD at Cofton Village Hall, on Wednesdays 9:30am, 5:30pm and 7:30pm.

ASSERTIVENESS AND HELPING SKILLS DONINGTON TRAINING runs classes at Alvechurch Village Hall. Easy, enjoyable and effective learning. Wednesdays from 19th January, pay what you think and can afford, any profits go to The Village Hall. For info: http://tinyurl.com/DTcdates or John Talbut (0121) 445 4607.

6 WEEK MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS COURSES to help you relax, find inner peace, and elevate your life. Join them on Wednesday evenings at The Friends Meeting House in Barnt Green or online whenever it suits you. Suitable for everyone! Enrol in the upcoming courses and discover how they've been changing lives at www.MeditationWithCoz.com or contact Coz at 07770067349. Follow on Facebook/Instagram: @MeditationWithCoz.

CHILDREN & FAMILIES

BABY Bounce & Rhyme is at Alvechurch Library Mondays 10–10.30am. Sing-a-long to traditional nursery rhymes and action songs.

STORYTIME at Alvechurch Library is on Tuesdays 11–11.30. Silly stories and tall tales for pre-school children to enjoy with parents and carers.

EVERY SCOUT GROUP in Bromsgrove (which includes Barnt Green, Blackwell, Catshill, Finstall and Lickey as well as the town centre) currently has girls and boys aged 6-18 waiting to join, their numbers restricted by the ratio of adults to young people. A few more adults helping would enable existing leaders to open more Beaver, Cub, Scout and Explorer units allowing more young people to experience Scouting and learn skills for life. If you could spare a few hours each month please contact us on 07539 031740 or visit scoutshw.org.uk

CURIOUS CUBS: An outdoor playgroup promoting nature and learning through play. Sessions run on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays for walkers to five years. Based at Barnt Green Sports Club, Margesson Drive, B45 8LR. Visit www.curiouscubs.co.uk for more infomation and to book your place.

DRAMA TOTS: Award-winning imaginary play classes for children 18 months to 5 years. Classes run term-time on Monday mornings in Alvechurch/Thursdays in Finstall (other days/venues available). Contact Jo 07738 969460 for details.

TINY CHURCH (stay and play for under-5s and their carer) meets in Holy Trinity Church, Lickey, each Weds from 11.15am–12.30pm during term times. Games, toys, snacks and stories, and a time to meet together with God. Just pop along, ring 0121 445 1425 or email clive.rushton@btinternet.com

THE NATIONAL CHILDBIRTH TRUST (NCT) runs ever-popular antenatal and post-natal courses to grow your knowledge and your network, allowing you to feel prepared and confident moving into the next chapter of your life. Discover and learn with other local parents-to-be, make vital connections and life-long friends in your community. Courses are held at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green. Visit www.nct.org.uk/courses-workshops or call 0300 330 0700.

SOLIHULL BABY MASSAGE is at Rowney Green Village Hall on Tuesday's. A relaxed environment for parents and babies to bond through massage. Visit www.solihullbabymassage.co.uk

RHYTHM TIME is a fun, award-winning developmental music classes for the under 5's. Classes in Alvechurch, Barnt Green, Bromsgrove, Redditch and lots more. Contact Vicky 07712 675 697 or visit www.rhythmtime.net

NEW ROAD PARENTS SUPPORT for parents of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans children meets monthly in Bromsgrove. A confidential, voluntary, small support group for parents by parents. Close links with FFLAG. Visit www.newroadparents.org, email newroadparents@gmail.com or get in touch via Facebook @New Road Parents Lgbtqi+ Support Group.

THEATRETRAIN Bromsgrove, performing arts for children 4-18yrs. Saturdays 10.30am-1.30pm. For a half-price trial email bromsgrove@theatretrain.co.uk or call 07766 724834.

TUTORING both online and in-person for Maths KS1 and KS2. English KS1 through to GCSE. For more information message 'Tutoring with Penny' on Facebook or email penny_foulkes@hotmail.co.uk

PRE-SCHOOL BALLET - NEW for September 2023 Pre-school (2 ½ - 4 yrs) ballet held at Barnt Green Baptist Church on Monday mornings from 10 am. Contact dancingpointe@outlook.com for further details.

GAMES & COMPETITIONS

SHIRLEY & WYTHALL CHESS CLUB meets at Wythall Community Association in Silver Street, Wythall, B47 6LZ, every Thurs from 7.30pm. The club has four teams playing in competitive leagues. Friendly atmosphere. New players are most welcome, just turn up or contact Barry Knee on 01564 826250

SPADESBOURNE Bridge Club plays at Amphlett Hall, Crown Close, Bromsgrove B61 8DW. Join the group for friendly bridge in a pleasant venue on Thurs evenings, 7pm for a 7.15 start. Table money for visitors is £3. Details from Jan on 01905 772256.

MONDAY Bridge Club at Barnt Green Friends Meeting House meets on Monday evenings at 6.30pm. They would love to welcome new members. If you have played a little bridge in the past, come along to try the friendly club. For more information call Olivia on 07583 484065.

FRIDAY Bridge Club meets at Burcot Village Hall every Friday evening. We play friendly, competitive Bridge in comfortable surrounds. We meet at 18:45 for a prompt start at 19:00. Refreshments are provided free of charge. For full details please contact the Secretary Ed Payne on 07950951122 or visit www.bridgewebs.com/friday

BROMSGROVE Bridge Club plays every Tuesday evening from 7.25 to 10.30pm at The Court Leet (a Hungry Horse Pub) 174 Worcester Road, Bromsgrove, B61 7AY. We are very friendly and welcome guests or potential new members, with or without a partner. The club is affiliated to the English Bridge Union and the Worcestershire Contract Bridge Association. Contact the Secretary, Sally Flood, on 01527 832468 or sallyflood@gmail.com

BROMSGROVE Board Gamers is a friendly group which meets at 7.30pm each Weds at the Ladybird Inn, Aston Fields. More info on Facebook 'Bromsgrove Board Gamers'.

BARNT Green Duplicate Bridge Club meets at St Andrew's Church Hall each Weds afternoon at 1.39pm. The club would make new members very welcome. For more information, speak to Cathy on 0121 445 1518.

REDDITCH CHESS CLUB meets at Alvechurch & Hopwood Cricket Club, Birmingham Road, Alvechurch B48 7TA, every Wednesday at 7.15pm September - May. The club has teams playing in both Birmingham and Worcester leagues. New players are welcome - just turn up or contact Giles Stanton on 07932 053621 or David Smith on 07540 304620.

ART, CRAFT & LITERATURE

THE WITHYBED POETS are local people who write poetry and share and discuss it with each other. You don't have to live in Withybed Green, though most of their meetings are there. They meet regularly every six weeks or so. They like to read to local audiences and some of them write "poetry on request". For more information and the date of next meeting, contact mail@marygreen.plus.com.

PAINTING & DRAWING If you enjoy painting and drawing, try this friendly community group which meets in the Rubery Leisure Centre, Holywell Lane, on Monday mornings, 9am-1pm, catering for all ages and abilities. The facilities are excellent for both indoor and outdoor working depending on personal preference and weather conditions. Tea and coffee is provided. Places are available. For further information telephone: 0121 453 7716 (Fridays).

COMMON THREAD: Bring your knitting, crochet, patchwork, sewing etc. All are welcome. Friendly help and chat. Meets on the last Saturday of each month (apart from Christmas Day, of course!) in The Wheel at St. Catherine's, Blackwell B60 1BN. Please bring your own drink to stay covid safe. Further information from Angela Bevan 0121 477 9924.

THE "CRAFTY LADIES" craft group meets every Monday morning in Alvechurch Library from 10am–1pm, with knitting, crocheting, sewing, quilting etc. More info on 01905 822722.

BURCOT WOODTURNING CLUB offers a friendly meeting place for woodturners of all

continues overleaf

continued from previous page

abilities and experience. A varied programme includes demos, talks, hands-on practical evenings and visits to exhibitions. The group meets on the first Thurs each month, 7.15–9.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Visit www.burcotwoodturners.org.uk

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY is available to host day and short courses such as card-making or scrapbooking. If you have a skill to teach or share and would like to rent a space, call the Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

AVONCROFT ARTS SOCIETY at Avoncroft Arts Centre (Redditch Road, Bromsgrove B60 4JR), runs tutored/ non-tutored classes in Art, Textiles, Ceramics, Embroidery and Dance. Contact AAS on 01527 833829 or avoncroft-arts@btconnect.com

ALVECHURCH ART GROUP meets at the Baptist Hall (rear of church) every Tues from 1–3.30pm, using all mediums except oil. All welcome, especially beginners. Friendly tuition. Call Paul on 0121 445 5437 or drop in.

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY Readers Group meets in the library on the first Thursday of the month from 2pm–3pm. New members always welcome. And don't forget that you can access online audio and e-books 24/7, free of charge, by downloading the Borrowbox app. Visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/libraries

LICKEY HILLS ART SOCIETY, a friendly bunch of artists and those interested in art, meet at Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Road, B45 9TY, on the first Sat each month at 7.30pm. Open to artists and non-artists alike. For more info email Lyn lyndasharp2010@yahoo.com or come along – the members would love to see you.

SEW TOGETHER meets on Tuesday mornings from 9.30am to 12.30pm during term time at the new Cofton Village hall. They meet weekly to sew and socialise. All abilities are welcome and there are a variety of sewing machines to borrow if required. For more information contact Avril on sewtogether64@gmail.com or see Sew Together Cofton Hackett on Facebook.

BARNT GREEN ART CLUB meets at Barnt Green Scout and Guide HQ in Blackwell Road, Barnt Green. Tuesday morning and Tuesday afternoon sessions. Workshops with visiting tutors during each term. Enquiries from improvers and intermediate artists are welcomed. Jackie: 0121 445 4745.

MARLBROOK QUILTERS meet on the 1st Wednesday of the month at Avoncroft Arts Centre, Redditch Road, Stoke Heath, Bromsgrove B60 4JR. They are a small friendly group who would like to welcome new members. For more information contact Maggie Forknell 07973 313034 or Sheila Nunnerley 0121 445 2238.

THE SEASONS ART CLASS is an art course where you can discover your inner artist. Perfect for absolute beginners to improvers. Classes held at Rowney Green Village Hall, Bournheath Village Hall & Ullenhall Village Hall. Get in touch to find out more by emailing seasonsartredditch@outlook.com.

KINGS NORTON PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY meet at The Tennis Club, Grange Hill Road, Birmingham B38 8RE. Season starts 18/10/23 at 8.00pm. For information contact Dave Wall Tel: 0121 458 2562, email: dave.walluk@virgin.net

GARDENS & FLOWERS

BLACKWELL COMMUNITY GARDEN in the grounds of St Catherine, Blackwell. Pop along to help water, plant and harvest. Info on 0121 445 1425.

ROWNEY GREEN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY meet at The Village Hall on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7.15p.m. On Thursday, 12 October they welcome Adrian James and his topic will be "Through the Garden Gate". James has been photographing gardens and plants on a freelance basis for many years. He has a passion for travel, often to places somewhat off the well beaten track and always with a camera in his hands! He has an interest in garden history and thinks about "what gardens are actually for!". James is based in Offenham near Evesham, and his other interest is as the under-gardener at Langdale Garden.
Guests are always welcome £3.50 including coffee and biscuits. For more information please do not hesitate to contact Lindsay Smith on 01527 592874.

DODFORD GARDENING CLUB meets on the 2nd Monday each month (except August) usually in Dodford Village Hall at 7.45pm. New members and visitors welcome. More info at www.dodfordgardeningclub.co.uk or call Penny on 07706 153618.

ROWNEY GREEN FLOWER CLUB, meets on the fourth Thursday of the month except in December when it is the first Thursday. The next meeting will be on October 26th at 7.30pm with a demonstration by Bev Short. The cost for visitors is £5, with refreshments included. Arrangements will be raffled at the event.

BROMSGROVE FLOWER CLUB holds regular monthly meetings on the 3rd Thursday of each month. Meets at 2pm, at All Saints Church Hall, Burcot Lane, Bromsgrove B601AF. A yearly membership is available or come as a visitor & dip in & out. Refreshments & then a demonstration of flower arrangements and a raffle and you may be lucky and take one home. Further information on 0121 445 1915.

SOLIHULL & District Orchid Society meets on the 1st Sat each month at St George & St Teresa's Parish Centre, Station Road, Dorridge B39 8EZ. New members and visitors welcome. For more information or advice you can call Monica Johnson on 01926 747822 or email at kenneth.johnson99@ntlworld.com. You can also visit www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk to see more.

HELP & ADVICE

POPPIES' is a monthly bereavement support group — contact Rev Sheri Gidney on 0121 445 1185 for details.

DIVORCED/separated and having trouble seeing your children? Being excluded from their lives? The ASSOCIATION FOR SHARED PARENTING has been helping mums and dads in the family court system and problems over contact and residence for over 20 years. Visit www.associationforsharedparenting.org.uk

REPAIR CAFE is for those looking to save their money and fix broken or faulty household items. The Repair Cafe is part of an international network that keeps faulty appliances and clothes out of landfill and offers 'a cuppa' and a slice of cake to visitors while they wait. Visit the Repair Shop on the first Saturday of every month 2-5pm at All Saints Hall, Burcot Lane, B60 1AD. For more info: 07804251731 or repaircafebromsgrove@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH LIBRARY hosts one-to-one Computer Sessions for people wanting to learn the basics. If you need help with emails or advice on surfing online then pop in to arrange for free tuition, provided by volunteers. They can also help with online applications for Blue Badges and bus passes. For more info call The Hub on 01905 822722 and ask for Alvechurch Library.

GUIDE DOGS are looking for volunteers who could give a few hours of their time to help someone locally and living with sight loss, get out and about. Volunteer sighted guides support the person they are partnered with to feel part of the community.
No previous experience is necessary and full training will be provided and the role is extremely flexible! More information email MidlandsMSG@guidedogs.org.uk or visit www.guidedogs.org.uk

WOMEN'S INSTITUTES

FINSTALL CROSS WI meets at Finstall Village Hall on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. For more info see www.finstallcross-wi.wordpress.com or email finstallcrosswi@gmail.com

BEOLEY WI meets on the first Tuesday of each month in Beoley Village Hall at 7.00pm. More info from Joan Lovett on 01527 584047 or email beoleysec@wfedwi.org.uk

BENTLEY PAUNCEFOOT WI meets at 7.30pm on the second Tues every month at Bentley Village Hall (B97 5TB). More information from Helen Spence on 01527 822611 or email bentleypauncefootsec@wfedwi.org.uk

BARNT GREEN WI meets at the Baptist Church at 7.30pm on the 3rd Thursday of the month. For more information: Jenny Jellie 07983 865372.

BROMSGROVE BELLES WI meets on the second Monday each month at the Meeting Room at St Godwald's Church at 7.30pm. For more info, contact President Helen Holbeche at helenholbeche@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH WI meets on the second Monday each month in Alvechurch Village Hall, at 7.30pm. For more information email Lin Neal lin.neal@hotmail.com or alvechurch-pres@wfedwi.org.uk

LICKEY WI usually meets on the first Tues every month at 7.30pm in the Parish Hall (Trinity Centre), Old Birmingham Road, Lickey. More info from Jenny Ryder on 0121 445 1872, Lickeywi@gmail.com or www.lickeywi.wordpress.com

HILLSIDE AT ALVECHURCH WI meets at 7.45pm on the first Weds each month at The Ark, Alvechurch. For more info call Pat McDonagh on 0121 628 4121.

BLACKWELL & BURCOT WI meets at Burcot Village Hall on the second Weds each month, at 2pm. For info call President Mrs Barbara Knight on 0121 445 3456.

HOPWOOD WI meets at Hopwood Village Hall on the first Thurs of the month at 7.30pm. For more information call Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668.

ST CATHERINE'S BLACKWELL WI meets on the 3rd Wednesday each month at 7.30pm at Burcot Village Hall. Contact Sue Barrett for more information on 01527 596092 or susan-barratt222@gmail.com

RUBERY WI meets on the 2nd Weds of the month at 7.30pm at Beacon Church Centre, when there are speakers, activities and competitions. The 4th Weds of each month is the craft evening. Non-members are welcome. Contact Judie1055@yahoo.co.uk 07810765314.

FAIRFIELD WI meet at Fairfield village hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm. For further details contact Carol Hine at fairfieldwi1932@gmail.com

VILLAGE VENUES FOR HIRE

HOPWOOD VILLAGE HALL is available for hire for parties, groups and gatherings. Please contact Booking Secretary Ann Thurrell on 0121 447 7668 or visit www.hopwoodvillagehall.co.uk

TARDEBIGGE COMMUNITY HALL for hire: large, bright facility for functions, clubs, societies and all activities. To book call 07763 446902 or email tchbookings@gmail.com

THE WHEEL COMMUNITY ROOM IN BLACKWELL has daytime, evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire —more info on 0121 445 1425.

THE TRINITY CENTRE IN LICKEY has evening and weekend availability for one-off and regular hire – more info on 0121 445 1425.

BARNT GREEN PARISH CENTRE has large and medium sized lounges available for regular hire for some morning and early afternoon sessions each week. Please contact the Parish Administrator on 0121 447 7097.

THE ARK AT ST LAURENCE has a large hall and kitchen, and smaller upper room for hire, for one-off and regular hires. More information and bookings please contact Lynda on 0121 447 7955 or email admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

ALVECHURCH VILLAGE HALL is available for hire to groups, clubs, societies, and private parties. The large bright hall has a stage, PA system, kitchen and bar area. There is also a smaller conference room available for hire. Enquiries to the Hall Manager Andrea Ottley on 07455892909 or hallmanager.avh@gmail.com

ALVECHURCH CRICKET CLUB PAVILION is available for hire: weekdays for community groups/clubs/societies, evening functions/ private parties. Licensed bar, dance floor, kitchen area and great outdoor space. Enquiries to Stuart Brereton via 07775 714165 or ahcc.bar@gmail.com

FAIRFIELD VILLAGE HALL is available to hire for functions, groups and parties. It has a large hall with kitchen facilities. Contact the booking secretary Andrew on 07762749943 or bookings@fvh.org.uk. See website for details www.fvh.org.uk

FEATURE IN WHAT'S ON

The deadline for submissions to the What's On in the November issue of *The Village* is 11 October 2023. Please email: info@villageonline.co.uk

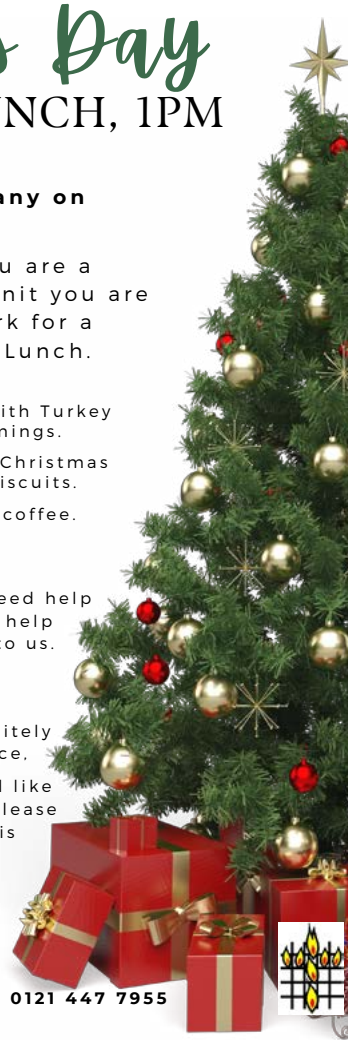
Christmas Day

COMMUNITY LUNCH, 1PM

The Ark, Alvechurch

Do you fancy some company on Christmas Day?

Whether you live alone, you are a couple or a larger family unit you are invited to join us at The Ark for a Christmas Day Community Lunch.



MENU

A tradition Christmas lunch with Turkey or Nut Roast and all the trimmings.

Dessert will be a selection of Christmas treats including cheese and biscuits.

Wine, soft drinks and tea and coffee.

TRANSPORT

Would you like to come but need help in getting to The Ark? We can help with this too! Call and speak to us.

BOOKING

If you know that you are definitely coming, please book in advance.

If on Christmas Day you would like to come but haven't booked please do come along anyway, there is always plenty to go round.

COST

Free. There is no cost

To book or for more information please speak to Lynda at The Ark 0121 447 7955 admin@thearkalvechurch.co.uk

Soggy season fails to dampen spirit on the pitch

Stuart Brereton looks back over a successful summer at Alvechurch & Hopwood Cricket Club – and forward to the next one.

Well, what a season it's been! The 4th and 3rd XI teams were proud to welcome many aspiring junior cricketers into the world of adult cricket while the 2nd and 1st XI teams made excellent progress in their respective leagues.

Our ladies' team were crowned undefeated winners of the Worcester County Competition and our U12s, for the second year running, won the county champions cup.

We really would like to say a huge "well done" to all of our teams this year.

It would be very remiss of us to not give special mention to our devoted grounds team, Chris Wolstencroft, Graham Jenkins and Mark Saunders. Thanks for your hard work and preparation over the course of the season – especially as the weather was not in the least bit kind.

Above: The Under-12s celebrate winning the county champions cup.

Refurbishment works to the clubhouse and bar coupled with the addition of SkyTV has really enhanced the club.

Junior training moved to Friday nights and was hugely successful: I'm not exactly sure who had the most fun – the children, or the parents!

Seeing the clubhouse full of happy children, having received brilliant coaching from our team of coaches and happy parents thanks to our wide range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks was fantastic to see.

The relaunch of the Parents Committee added to the Friday night experience with their offering of fun and games.

Away from cricket, we hosted our first wedding for a number of years (congratulations Sophie and Rory) while Picnic In The Park was yet another fantastic event to be part of, and we are already planning for next year.

As cricket-related use of the clubhouse winds down, out-of-season hire really heats up. We are set to be extremely busy between now and Christmas with baby showers, birthday parties, milestone wedding anniversaries and festive family get togethers.

Social membership is on offer to anyone who would like to use the clubs bar at reduced members prices or who would like to either support the club financially or play occasional cricket but cannot commit to playing every weekend – all for just £2 per month.

If you would like to know more about Social Membership or to enquire about hiring our clubhouse for a private event, please email ahcc.bar@gmail.com.

Under the guidance of our committee and striving towards delivering the vision of our club President (all of whom are volunteers – yes , even bar "staff") we really want the club to be a hub for the whole community.

We are already home to the Women's Institute, a Wednesday ladies club, Chess Club and home for no fewer than three AGMs for various local organisations. So, if you're looking for a place for your group to meet, please do contact us.

Lastly, if you're not visiting us as a guest at one of the functions or club social events over the next few months, winter well and we look forward to a new cricket season starting next spring.

A Long goodbye

Alvechurch FC manager Ian Long has paid the price for the club's poor start to the season.

After only two wins in eight league starts, the Church were then dumped out of the FA Cup in the second qualifying round 5-2 by local rivals Halesowen Town.

This was in stark contrast to last season when the team went on a blazing FA Cup run, reaching the second round proper.

Two days after the loss at Halesowen in September, the manager – known affectionately as Peewee – was gone, with the club saying: "The club wishes to acknowledge the success and hard work of Ian Long.

"It wasn't an easy decision to part ways with the most successful manager in our history, however for the sustainability of our football club the role is more suited to a specialist player development coach rather than a traditional non-league manager.

"We would like to wish Ian all the very best for the future and we know he will be hugely successful wherever he goes."

He will be a very hard act to follow and the club said they were not going to rush into making an appointment.

"The club feel that it's better to make the right decision rather than a quick one and with this in mind, our current assistant manager, Richard Colwell, has agreed to step forward in a caretaker capacity," said a spokesman.

AFC FIXTURES (Oct)

14th Stamford (a) 3.00
21st Leiston (h) 3.00
24th AFC Telford United (a)19.45
28th Bromsgrove Sporting (a) 3.00

November

4th Coalville Town (h) 3.00
11th Nuneaton Borough (a) 3.00
18th St Ives Town (h) 3.00
25th Kettering Town (h) 3.00 League

Exciting play: Ian 'Peewee' Long shares his thoughts. Picture/ ***Ian Macvie***

Thank you for the memories, Peewee

As a supporter of Alvechurch FC for many years, it's always sad to see a manager leave after he has dedicated his footballing career to your club, *writes Trevor Ball*.

With Peewee, the past six years have not only been the most memorable, but the most exciting with the style of play he liked to play and the calibre of players he was able to recruit on a limited budget.

Under his tenure, the club came runners-up to Hereford in the league, securing more than 100 points; unfortunately only one promotion place was available that season, but the next season the club was promoted and amazingly the following season won promotion for the second consecutive year.

Now playing two levels higher, the club still managed to secure a promotion final playoff spot, beaten away at Kings Lynn, the following season and beaten in the playoff semi-final against Peterborough Sports the year after.

Who is going to forget the FA Cup run last season? Losing 2-0 at half time away at Mickleover in the first qualifying round, who would have guessed we would end up in the second round away at Forest Green.

The victorious away day to League One side Cheltenham Town will last in the memory of the 1,500 Alvechurch fans who travelled to Gloucestershire more in hope than expectation.

The buzz was felt not only around the village but across the country as the BBC made the second round draw live from Lye Meadow.

Thank you Peewee for all that you have achieved for the club: it's been a wonderful journey and on behalf of all the supporters all the very best in your footballing career.

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www.akfittedinteriors.co.uk

*Between 1.10.23 & 31.10.23.
T&Cs apply.